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My Search for Truth

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About my Book:

As a young law student, I learned of the many falsifications of the Church, became acquainted with the Moonies and their practices, and was so shocked by the lack of truthfulness and love of truth among those who believe in God that I decided to seek the truth myself. In my adventurous, long search through all sorts of subjects, I encountered prejudices of all kinds and finally discovered that people's view of the truth is mostly obscured by the dense fog of many prejudices.

In a fascinating and accessible way, I criticize the Church and show that a being that demands faith, calls for murder, exterminates and enslaves other peoples cannot be a God, but only a demon.

I try to show that people who believe in chance, money and power, but not in God, are also believers, and I point out that true knowledge of life can only be found through a sincere, open and unprejudiced search for truth.

In addition to my many years of self-employment as a programmer, I also enjoyed dealing with scientific questions. I found confirmation of the view that all being is spirit. I managed to find out that spirit is spaceless and how spirit 'works'. Just as worlds can appear and disappear on computer screens or in dreams, so spirit can appear and disappear out of 'nothing'.

As a scientifically minded person, I am of course aware that my considerations can only be a first step in the right direction. In the spiritual realm we are still where Kepler, Galilei and Newton were in the natural sciences a few centuries ago, because basic research is lacking or only partially available.

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Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	4
General Remarks	10
My encounter with the Moonies	13
The Factual Report	19
If Christianity does not scandalize you, you do not know it!	30
Mediumship	43
Malcolm S. Southwood reports	51
The Bridge of Consciousness	56
Far-Eastern and Ancient Seekers of Truth	58
Confucius and Laozi	68
Gautama Buddha	86
Pantheism	98
Personal experiences	103
Being and physics	107
Intelligence and Artificial Intelligence	110
References	113

Introduction

I attended private classes to obtain my high school diploma, and later, when I studied law at the University of Vienna, I had to rely on my own resources again and attended evening courses at a private school. The curriculum of the first part of my studies also included canon law and church history, and the lecturer continually amazed me with his discourses on the numerous falsifications and the lack of authentic works. It was wholly incomprehensible to me that the church was teaching things as the truth that theologians have long known to be falsifications and tendentious literature.

Probably out of curiosity, one evening after the First State Examination I attended a lecture by a 'Society for the Unification of World Christianity', which took place in a rented room at the University of Vienna. At that time I had no idea whatsoever about sects, so I thought I could talk reasonably to the nice young people who had come to the lecture. A nice young girl, barely fifteen years old, was immediately assigned to me as a kind of counsellor. After the lecture, I accepted the group's invitation to talk and was amazed to hear that a certain Mr. Moon from Korea had come into the world as the new Messiah to succeed where Christ had failed. However, I soon realised that the talk was not about the unification of Christianity, but about a new edition under the leadership of Mr. Moon. The main enemy was considered to be the “evil communism.”, which was universally condemned and cursed to hell. Some passages of the so-called 'Divine Principles' disseminated by this group struck me as downright childish and ridiculous. Certain historical accounts did not correspond to what I had learnt as a student about church history. I raised my objections and, for the first time in my life, noticed how friendly and seemingly truth-loving people listened attentively without paying attention to a single word.

After many conversations and excursions together, the leader of the group took me into his room and told me that the time had come to make a decision. He asked me to join the group and work for them, or not to visit them in the future. This inhuman demand for mental and physical slavery surprised and shocked me beyond words. Firstly, I came from the mountains - my parents were mountain farmers - and had no idea of this particular kind of brutality; secondly, I liked the girl and didn't want to lose her.

Even then I suspected that Mun, as the new Messiah, was not without danger. He spoke of love with every breath, but his love seemed to end with those who thought differently, especially the communists, whom he saw as a new evil power. If people thought according to this new sect, they were good and useful; if they thought differently - perhaps even communist! - they were evil and satanic. The sentence I had heard somewhere began to pound inside me: 'If you don't want to be my brother, I'll smash your head in! No and no again, I would not sell my soul for anything!

So began my search for the truth. More painful disappointments followed, I even changed my plans for the future and dropped out of law school. For many years I then searched through the maze of different doctrines and studied all sorts of subjects until I finally realised why people wander through this world as if in a fog, not finding the truth and not even knowing what they are, where they come from and where they go after their earthly demise.

At first I spent a lot of time in the Austrian National Library in Vienna. The sect

members had told me about spiritual experiences and claimed that they could talk to the dead. They fasted for a few days and experienced something. I tried it, of course, and after three days of depriving myself of food and fluids, I discovered forces within me that were somehow turning. I felt quite clearly that some of them were much larger than the body and how they entered and exited, so that I could estimate their size from the time between leaving and re-entering the body. Only later did I learn that in Far Eastern thought these forces are called 'chakras'.

In the National Library I found enough books on spiritual communication with the afterlife. Some books seemed to me not to have been written by madmen, but in an open and sincere spirit. In particular, I found a so-called factual report that quickly captivated me because it seemed so kind, open and sincere, and because it gave a scientific answer to the question of the origin and meaning of life. I visited the editor, an elderly gentleman, who I soon realised could not possibly be the author of the factual report. So I visited the so-called medium, a gentleman over eighty who had been a tram driver in Vienna. He was a friendly man who told me how he had been trained as a medium and how he had been used as a writing medium for a long time. He described how his hand began to write at night without his intervention and how he had written many pages in the morning, the contents of which he could only marvel at. I am convinced that he could not have written this report on his own.

The author of the report claimed to be called John and to have been a disciple of Christ. He had been commissioned by the beings on the other side, specifically the disciples of Christ, to write the account for humanity and to transmit it through the medium. He explained that Christ had called the God of the Jews evil and had therefore been persecuted by them. All the records of Christ's disciples had been destroyed by the forgers and replaced by misleading claims. What Christ had really taught and said, he, John, had recorded in his factual account.

The longer I studied it, the more the account fascinated me. For example, it was claimed that Christ came from the Essenes and not from the Jews. In fact, a few years after the factual report, numerous writings were found in Qumran by the Dead Sea, which indicated that Christ came from the Essenes!

All would have gone well, and I might have become an ardent supporter of the factual report if I had been a little more religious. But as it was, I couldn't stop thinking about every unclear or obviously false statement. To my surprise, I even found a second factual report that differed significantly from the first in some chapters. How could there be - for heaven's sake! - how could there be two different versions of a factual report of the afterlife? Naive as I was at the time, I couldn't digest this fact. It took me an enormous amount of time and inner turmoil until one day, in a fit of despair, I threw the entire factual report into the oven.

I was able to dispose of the book in the oven, but I couldn't erase it from my mind. The thoughts continued to have an effect, and I had to rethink and reexamine them again and again until I finally managed to understand the contradictions, retain the good and take note of the disappointing.

Not long after finishing my law studies and a few years after burning the report, I became a youth worker in an home for problem children because I wanted »to do something good« in the spirit of the factual report. I soon found my feet in this profession,

too, and eagerly studied the CVs of the children and young people who were housed in this home. Another disappointment came with the realisation that it was impossible to educate children and young people in such a home. How could hundreds of children and young people from difficult family backgrounds be housed in a barracks-like building and cared for by far too few carers? Were the carers not overtaxed? Were they even able to give the children and young people the security they needed to develop in a reasonably satisfactory way? I once dared to ask an educator why he had arrived for his night shift ten minutes before closing time. But he didn't think it was necessary to give an explanation to a young carer like me, so I made an entry in the service book, especially as the same carer liked to make impossible remarks about the youngsters. The head of the home was delighted with my supposed courage, the other educators were outraged and began to ignore me, whom they had previously called 'dear Mr. Sauerschnig'. My misfortune was that I didn't know that the educator I had noted in the service book had been playing cards and drinking with colleagues.

Matured by this experience, I left the teaching profession and became self-employed in a profession I had never practised before, but for which I had been granted a trade licence on the basis of my school-leaving certificate. I set up a reproduction centre, started doing all kinds of typing work, gradually bought printing machines, copying and typesetting equipment and even a reproduction camera. A few years later, when I bought a computer and started writing my own programs, other companies asked me to improve their programs or write new ones. When a dealer expressed the intention of even offering my programs at an office trade fair, I changed my job again and founded a software company in the Waldviertel.

However, I not only did programming work, I also sold hardware and taught computer courses at an educational institute offering adult courses for high school graduation. I also became interested in the structure of computers, their functions and basic programmes, and increasingly understood what it meant to have ideas and to use them to bring a device to life. I compared the programmes to biological processes and noticed a certain similarity. So I immersed myself more and more in the study of biology and physics to understand the connections.

Soon after I began my search for the truth, I began to study intensively the question of how different world systems could coexist. If there is an afterlife, I said to myself, then there must be an answer to the question of how two or more world systems can coexist. At that time, however, I was still very much influenced by the thoughts of the factual report and was not yet able to see things more clearly.

The Factual Report described impressively that everything is spirit, whereby spirit must be imagined as a force (energy). Many other reports and treatises also assumed that everything was spirit. Einstein indirectly and impressively confirmed the otherworldly theories that assumed that matter (mass) was only a form of energy (spirit). It was only many years later that I realised that energy, like space, colours and shapes, can only be effects of spirit.

Today I am sure that everything is spirit and that everything that exists is based on the expression of the will of spirit.

I buried my belief in the existence of an omniscient and omnipotent God (as Yahweh claims) with increasing doubt about the accuracy of the factual record. Above all, I realised

that it is impossible to consciously comprehend many events side by side. Imagine a particularly intelligent person and put him next to a simple person. What is the difference between them? The difference is that the particularly receptive person can be more imaginative than the person for whom ideas don't really want to come. But both can only do one thing at a time. Reading, writing, singing, watching television, cooking, observing animals, etc., not even the highly intelligent person can do all this at the same time!

The following personal experience made me realise that there is more to life than what we perceive: one day I was driving to Amaliendorf with Christine and her two children. Christine was driving and I was sitting next to her in the front seat. Suddenly I had a very strong feeling that we were going to hit a car, even though I couldn't see one. Lo and behold, a car appeared on our side of the road a short time later! Just before the collision, the oncoming driver managed to swerve out of the way. How could I have felt that a vehicle was threatening us? It couldn't have been an illusion, because Christine's son later told me that he had had a similar strange feeling.

I was also particularly struck by certain dreams. In the early years, when I was searching intensely for the truth and had questions, I would often dream the answer and wake up at a very specific time. There were even times when I didn't wake up, but was awakened by some other sound - a child screaming, for example. A glance at the clock showed the same time again, to the minute! One day I had some unanswered questions again and had a dream - but, lo and behold, I dreamt that I would no longer receive such dreams and would have to go my own way. Since then I have not had such dreams, and I do not wake up at this time, although I have often wished that I would.

These are personal experiences, of course, but they could certainly be taken seriously from a scientific point of view. I am convinced that many people have spiritual experiences of all kinds, but keep quiet about them because they don't want to make a fool of themselves.

I have seen on television a shaman's tongue being cut off and then growing back. Walking over hot coals without burning your feet may not be proof of the existence of the spirit either. But all these facts and experiences are clear indications that there is more to it than we are prepared to admit today.

As an entrepreneur, I have employed many people over the years, and as a programmer, I have gained insight into hundreds of companies. I've seen people's strengths, their weaknesses and their mistakes, and I've enjoyed the business side of things. I have tried to write easy-to-use and self-explanatory programs to serve the many people in the commercial sector. In the process, I learned about the limitations and the flood of laws that have to be created for such a society. In a state where everyone tries to get the best for themselves, there will never be enough, despite great technological progress, the state will always become insolvent. In a community in which the strong try to become even stronger by investing their wealth well and by being able to work without their own strength, in a community in which people can mark their boundaries which no one is allowed to cross without permission, there will always be the privileged and the disadvantaged, the poor, the hungry and the starving. If the rich are allowed to get richer through speculation and not through work, if people with certain opportunities can quickly increase their money while others are paid next to nothing for their work, then there will always be regions, continents and sections of the population who have to 'live' in poverty, misery and on the brink of starvation. In such an unjust world, new ideologies are

constantly emerging which claim the right to take away the benefits of others by force.

It is clear to all non-primitive people that living together is only possible in true spirit and love. No one needs to stand up and shout about how bad and evil people are and how incapable of love they are. It is not that simple. In paradise it may be easy to sing hallelujah and shine all day long, but here on earth we find conditions that often make us cry rather than sing.

Many of our major problems have their origins in the natural laws of this world into which we are born. Helpless, at the mercy of our parents, we arrive here and leave this world tired and exhausted. Between our arrival and departure, however, we work our way up, seeking support, recognition and some satisfaction of our desires.

As a father and educator, I have never encountered bad children, only adults with mountains of prejudice. Perhaps there really are bad children, and perhaps some people are bad by nature, but I have never personally experienced this. The so-called difficult children with whom I lived for a while were problem children because they had grown up in unacceptable conditions; for me they were not proof that people are inherently evil, that they are born with original sin, as the Church suggests.

Our prejudices are very detailed and we often don't recognise them as such. Everything that has to be or is supposed to be like this screams to heaven and turns children into what adults later become. They begin to believe all kinds of nonsense and carry a rucksack full of prejudices with them until some of them collapse under them.

What is so important to us! The ladder of constraints begins at birth and ends only at death. How much knowledge children have to take in! If they are not gifted enough, they get worse grades, as if a child of lesser intellectual ability were worse than a naturally gifted one. Instead of nurturing ability, we shower children with knowledge to make it easier for them to enter the next level of constraint, the workplace. And that's where it really starts! Produce, make money, increase sales, increase productivity, pay taxes, outsmart the competition, modernise, automate, get bigger and bigger and bigger to the point of madness! Those who are not good enough are weeded out, put on unemployment benefits or pushed onto the sidings like a broken-down locomotive.

Ever since Darwin showed us that evolution is based on a successful struggle for existence, the strong and the cunning have been spiritually nourished and confirmed that in this struggle for survival it is permissible to pull out all the stops to gain an advantage. Thinking in terms of advantage has grown like a weed, and today it is taken for granted that everyone is looking out for their own advantage. Whenever we do something, we ask ourselves how it will benefit us. Everyone sells themselves as best they can, everyone takes what they can from the state, from the community.

When a guilty conscience sets in, many become true artists of repression and reinterpretation. They create theories and justify what can be justified. Many accept medals and titles, look to supposed role models, people who live in beautiful villas, drive yachts, wear nice clothes and spend more in a day than many families do in a year.

What good is it to claim that we live in the best of all possible worlds?

The fact is that far from being the best of all possible worlds, this is a cruel and

harsh world that forces us to behave in repulsive and disgusting ways. Is there anything worse than the fact that one living being can only exist at the expense of the life of another?

Christ says beautiful words in the factual report: One living being serves another in charity. Fine words, perhaps, for the eater, but certainly not for the eaten!

I simply object to the fact that we constantly lie to ourselves and go through life as hypocrites, great and small. Let's take the facts as they are and not constantly disguise them with all sorts of lies, big and small, that only make things worse!

Many people talk about truth and mean what they mean. Many talk about justice, but mean what they want. Many believe in God, but the God they believe in is a God of their own belief. He should be and act as they themselves think is good and right.

This can lead to a spiritual quagmire and a lack of knowledge about life from which there seems to be little escape. But truth has first and foremost to do with truthfulness, with sincerity, openness and charity. If we really want to get to the bottom of life and not be satisfied with beliefs of any kind - no matter how scientifically packaged - then we must first behave truthfully, break down our prejudices and recognise ourselves.

After many years of searching for the truth, I have come to the conclusion that not everything in this world is a coincidence. But we will only understand the meaning of life and gain insight into spiritual processes when we begin to understand the spirit and ourselves, when we leave the present spiritual level and turn to truth and charity.

General Remarks

In the first part of my work I would like to tell the reader where I come from and how I came to search for the truth.

Using the example of the Moon sect, which I visited, I would like to show the dangers of cults on the one hand, and to explain why many people end up in cults and how these cults can be successful on the other.

Using the example of the factual report, which has occupied me a great deal, I would like to show that even with good will, love of the truth and honest intentions, great mistakes can be made. Certain circumstances and facts, as well as the immaturity of the times, are enough to tempt people to draw certain wrong conclusions and commit certain wrong actions. Using the factual report as an example, I would also like to show that there may be other explanations for why there are no authentic writings by and about Christ and why so much has been falsified and predated.

Finally, I would like to give a voice to critical voices such as Joachim Kahl and Gustav Wyneken, who have examined and described the foundations of the Church and its work. I think it is necessary to criticize the church's way of thinking once again. The time has come to throw dogmas overboard and to seek to live together in a true spirit.

I would also like to refer to books that deal scientifically with the study of the spirit and spiritual phenomena. They are a guide to how to approach the questions of life and the afterlife objectively and free of religious beliefs.

Finally, it is important to me to draw the reader's attention to people who have worked in the past, seeking the truth and working for the good of their fellow human beings. They can serve as examples of love for the truth and show us that even great spiritis are subject to the problems and natural limitations of earthly life and can err.

The years before the search for truth began

My parents were mountain farmers on the Saualpe in Carinthia. My father, born in 1895, was already 50 years old when I was born. I remember him as a very kind person. He was a brilliant storyteller and popular entertainer, a progressive thinker and a good father. On long winter evenings he would tell us about his experiences in two world wars. We children, neighbours or acquaintances, would listen to him talk about his imprisonment in Russia, the cold winters, his attempts to help fellow prisoners, his escape, his service on the home front in the Second World War and his experiences with the partisans.

My three brothers, my sister and I attended primary school in Greutschach. The secondary school was almost two hours' walk away in Griffen, so no pupil even considered attending that school. When I was ten years old, I wanted to attend this secondary school, although I had only heard a little about it. My parents discouraged me, but eventually let me go. It wasn't long before I had to go back to primary school. I couldn't buy the things I needed and I didn't have the book my English teacher wanted to test me on after two weeks. On top of that, I was feeling sick around this time, so I burst into tears when my English teacher, who had no idea about my situation, gave me a five.

As the first born, my older brother Erich was supposed to take over the farm one day. My younger brother Richard was lucky enough to be sent by the priest to Tanzenberg to become a priest (which didn't happen). As the second-born son, my parents wanted me to marry into a farming family one day. But there was something in me as a boy that I still can't quite explain. I saw a notice on the church gate that late-comers had a chance somewhere, and when I was fifteen I wanted to take the opportunity and become a businessman. In fact, my future boss asked me while I was shopping if I wanted to be a shop assistant. I was immediately enthusiastic and begged my parents to let me go. I eventually became an apprentice and was allowed to pick currants on my first day. Later I often worked as a labourer, helping the boss with bricklaying. But I took the first opportunity to change.

During my apprenticeship I attended a typewriting course and often studied the posters of »Maturaschule Dr. Roland«, a school that advertised the opportunity to obtain a high-school diploma via evening courses. But I didn't have the money, so I decided to wait and join the army as soon as possible. I was sent to Villach and then to the military headquarters in Klagenfurt, where, after learning to type with ten fingers, I was assigned to the office of the company commander.

At that time I enrolled with Dr Roland, received lecture notes, learnt English and Latin, mathematics and German. I decided to stay in an army office for a few years, but I wanted to be transferred to Vienna, which the commander refused, despite my good reasons, because he wanted to keep me in his office. And so, without really knowing it at the time, I had my first encounter with nepotism and opportunism. I shared my room with a soldier who had good contacts to the school inspector and who supported my cause via his political party in the Ministry of Defense. Since the minister belonged to a different party, however, the intervention 'only' resulted in my being transferred to Group Command I in Vienna. When the commander called me into his office after my transfer to Group Command - I still don't know why - he asked me if I had friends in a certain party. I told him the truth, adding that my father was a farmer and had always voted for the other party. A short time later I was transferred to the Ministry of Defence and assigned to a Carinthian major who understood and supported me.

Within about three years I passed my high school finals, but I was under such strain that I had to hold my cup with both hands so as not to spill my coffee. Even several months after the exams I still dreamed about them and in the mornings I woke up and was no longer sure whether or not I had actually passed them. What was even worse was that at that time my father died in sad circumstances so that I often dreamed about him. I dreamed that he was with us again, how he lived and died again...

My contract with the army expired and I looked for a job in payroll accounting. I started studying law because I wanted to be a judge or a human resources manager in a big company, and also because I saw few other options. After a year I passed the first of three state exams. The subjects included canon law and church history.

I went to a public school where law was taught. The professor was a kind of funny man who knew how to present the inconsistencies in the Church in a somewhat amusing way. He spoke of forgeries and more forgeries, and I could only wonder. It did not occur to me that the priests could speak of the truth and hide the forgeries, knowing that they were forgeries.

At that time a 'Society for the Unification of World Christianity' was holding lectures in a rented room at the University of Vienna. I saw this as an opportunity to learn more about Christianity. But things turned out differently than I had imagined at the time.

My encounter with the Moonies

One evening in February 1970, as I was driving to the University of Vienna, I met a group of young people in front of the university. Some of them immediately approached me and asked if I would be willing to attend the lecture of the 'Society for the Unification of World Christianity'. I agreed. I was then introduced to a young girl called Sylvia. She would tell me about the activities of the 'Society for the Unification of World Christianity' and answer my questions, I was told.

I do not remember what the lecture was about. After the talk, Sylvia asked me if I would accompany her and her friends to the headquarters of the Society for the Unification of World Christianity so that they could spend some more time together and discuss things. I gladly agreed, went with them and was surprised by the warmth and openness of these young people. Only their leader, Peter, was a little older and seemed somehow different to me.

We sat around a large table, tea and probably coffee was served, and I was told about a Korean man called Moon who, at the age of sixteen, had a vision on Easter morning. Jesus appeared to him and told him to complete his mission, which had failed 2,000 years earlier. For seven years, Moon struggled with his calling and the content of his faith, wandering alone through the mountains, praying, crying and experiencing the reality of spiritual forces and beings, especially Satan. Eventually, Moon was arrested, thrown into prison and tortured by the communists. As he was given hardly any food, he nearly starved, but he withstood his tormentors and received spiritual assistance. After fully accepting himself as the second Messiah and third Adam, he married the eighteen-year-old Han and entered into a perfect marriage with her, the marriage that God willed and consummated with Adam and Eve after their creation. From then on, Moon and his Han regarded themselves as the 'True Parents', and the 'True Family' gradually grew within the community of Moon's followers. From now on, children without original sin will be born through Moon's Insight and the True Parents.

Everyone sat moved, some with tears in their eyes. What a battle this brave man had fought for humanity! I was also impressed.

I was given a book called 'Divine Principles' to read. I accepted it and said that I would definitely study it.

I repeated my visits and was especially happy to see Sylvia again. She was a simple, warm and sweet girl, so genuine, open and honest. I soon realised that she was happy to see me too.

However, I was not at all enthusiastic about the Divine Principles. They contained strange stories about God and creation, no more intelligent than those in the Bible. God created the world not so much out of free creative will as out of necessity. God needed a counterpart so that his energy could pulsate and his love could be reflected. The task of Adam and Eve was to form a perfect and sinless counterpart to the divine. But unfortunately there was Lucifer, the archangel and collaborator in creation, who now felt neglected and no longer loved by God, and who had taken a liking to Adam and Eve. He entered the Garden of Eden and began a 'give and take' with Eve, who was 15 years old at the time, seducing her into 'fornication'. Thus man became a sinner and Lucifer became

Satan.

After these dramatic events, God had no choice but to devise a plan to restore the original state. Moon - who else? - was destined to play a decisive role, and all lines of development were to converge on him. Moon clarified these thoughts of God by dividing history into periods, the most important of which was to last 400 years, beginning with 1520 (the Reformation) and ending with 1920 (the year of Moon's birth).

Jesus, as the second Adam with a new Eve, had the task of laying the foundation for a new humanity, but he didn't understand his task at all, didn't start anything with women, didn't marry an Eve and didn't father any sinless children.

We talked at length. Sometimes I had to smile at the pious stories, sometimes I was annoyed and couldn't understand why my objections weren't taken seriously. There was one silly story that I'll never forget, even if I can't remember the details. Moses could have saved mankind if he hadn't forgotten to bang his stick on something at a certain moment!

How could these young people, mostly students like me, swallow such nonsense, I kept asking myself. When I pressed the issue and said that there couldn't be a God like that, they fell silent, not because they felt caught, but because they doubted my maturity.

Once, when we were alone, Sylvia said: 'Johann, be careful, not everything is as it seems with us! Sylvia had come to the group with her two sisters, her parents paying little attention to them. She told me about her home and her difficulties. I felt comfortable with her.

A few weeks passed. Sometimes my brother Richard, who was studying economics and to whom I felt very close, came with me. On Sundays the group held a prayer service with singing and talks. Once the group took me on an 'outing'. Wherever I went, I was met with joy and warmth.

One day Peter, the leader of the group, called me into his small office and said something like, "Johann, you have been with us for a long time and you know what we want. You have to decide now! Stay and work with us or leave the group forever!

I was very surprised, turned pale and searched for words. You can't ask me that! I am searching for the truth. But I have not found it with you yet. I do not find your divine principles divine, and some of your claims do not agree with what I have learned as a student of Church history!

Peter just looked at me and made no move to change his mind. Had he seen how much I liked Sylvia? Had he worked out that I would never give up on Sylvia?

No, you can't buy me, you can't make me your slave,' I thought to myself. I was looking for the truth, not a place of relative contentment. I refuse to be trapped here and now!

So I got up and walked away.

The phrase I had heard somewhere was hammering away at me: "If you don't want to be my brother, I'll smash your skull!" I was beside myself, kind of devastated. I just

couldn't believe that people could do that to each other. Why did I have to leave them, why give up the friendships I had started? Why were the stories of God and Moon so important to them that they had to reject people who couldn't follow them?

I thought of Sylvia and my pain increased. How could I see her again, talk to her? She had already said 'yes' to Moon, the 'Day of Knowledge' was already over for her.

What was I to do? Was I wrong and was it perhaps my immaturity that prevented me from understanding Moon and his teachings?

I thought about what I had heard in the history of the church. How could there have been such embarrassing falsifications, how could my parents have known nothing about it and the priest never said anything about it? So much was wrong! The Gospels were not really written by the apostles, the Acts of the Apostles were written after 100 AD, and countless 'documents' were created and backdated. The concept of the trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was only laid down in a synod in 325 A.D., a synod in which there was more quarrelling and fighting than discussion. The whole history of the Church is full of blood, conflict, persecution of dissenters, torture, burning of witches, curses and damnations!

And now this experience with the Society for the Unification of World Christianity! Even the name was a deception, nobody was unifying Christianity, they were just trying to achieve their own new goals!

I ran to the National Library and looked for all kinds of books. Members of the group had assured me that it was possible to make spiritual contact with the dead and have various experiences. They fasted for several or many days. I also tried it 'naturally', took everything very seriously and did not eat or drink for three days. After that I felt forces within me that I had no idea about before. They moved through the body, way above the head and back under the feet. It seemed to me that there was more than this one movement. The movement itself depended on my inner balance and could be influenced by thoughts.

So I began to neglect my law studies and turned more and more to the study of spiritual matters.

Moon and his movement

Twenty-five years after my contact with the Society for the Unification of World Christianity, around the time I started writing this article, I found a book that describes religious communities in a remarkably objective way. The 'Handbook of Religious Communities', published by Gütersloher Verlagshaus, includes the Moonist movement among the youth religions that have emerged since the late 1960s in Europe and other highly industrialised regions of the world. The most striking common feature of these groups is their recruitment of adolescents and young adults, offering 'holy masters' with absolute divine authority and 'saved families'. A drastic and rapid change in personality is observed time and again,' says page 819. “When all criticism is eliminated, total devotion follows. The change in personality and the ethical and moral reorientation often lead – sometimes quite unusual - to social and family problems, and even to conflicts with the law.”

It is interesting to note how the members of the group, at least at the time of my visits, saw their great and beloved Master in a glorified light and how reality looked. The methods and procedures, as far as I have been able to observe, may also be similar to those of other cults.

The group saw Moon and his wife as the 'True Parents', parents as they were supposedly Adam and Eve before Eve's sexual intercourse with Lucifer. The fact is, however, that Moon married for the first time at the age of 26, was arrested for sexual misconduct in 1948 and charged with bigamy when he married his follower Kim Yong-On and the affected husband filed a complaint. In 1955, Moon was again tried for sexual offences, and it was not until 1960, after divorcing his third wife, that he became a true parent by marrying 17-year-old Han Hak-Ja.

As well as fishing for souls, Moon founded companies all over the world. In 1959, he founded 'Yeohwa Shotgun', which initially produced air rifles and later, as Tong II Company Ltd, became the core of an industrial conglomerate. In July 1982, he was sentenced in the US to a $25,000 fine and 18 months in prison for falsifying tax returns. He began serving his sentence in the summer of 1984 and served two-thirds of the time. He was released early for good behaviour.

To some extent, the spiritual level at which Mr Moon operated can be seen from his life. He had no problem making money from the manufacture of guns, and he also found it perfectly acceptable to tell people who thought differently, especially communists, to go to hell.

Moon is revered by his followers as the 'Lord of the Second Coming', who will establish the 'Heavenly Kingdom' first in Korea and then worldwide. Korea is considered the 'Holy Land' by Moon's followers. The final battle between Satan and God, also referred to as the Third World War, could well be fought with weapons.

The possibility of a massive physical, i.e. military, confrontation was repeatedly formulated: "*Once we have this strength in the United States, then the last enemy is Soviet Russia, then the march to Moscow becomes our motto. The new order begins today. We are fighting with our lives for the final victory*." ('Master Speaks, The Meaning of 1 July 1973').

Moon not only hates communists, he uses the fight against communism as a tactical tool. In a speech on 28 December 1980, 'Thinking Back Historically', Moon says: "*Many of you are wondering why I am fighting communism. The purpose is to bring all free nations and all religions into unity. By fighting communism we can achieve this."*

No matter which cult I was involved with, they all used tactics, justified violence and claimed power to achieve their goals. The Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, particularly fervent followers of the desert god Yahweh, are full of such destructive ideas, which they interpret constructively. Newcomers are first robbed of their healthy sense of right and wrong by beautiful images of the future. How quickly this state is reached depends on the desire for security and the satisfaction of one's own needs, and on the habit of accepting printed material relatively uncritically. One's own dreams for the future become mixed up with the rosy images of the sect, and it is not long before the newcomer begins to defend the sect's teachings. Every piece of nonsense and every evil act is presented as oh so

necessary and inevitable and defended to the bitter end.

Is Moon a fraud?
Are masters like Moon charlatans?

Now it would be easy to label Moon and his ilk as fraudsters, even though they are obviously fraudsters and know exactly where honesty ends and deception begins. In reality, they are victims like all their followers, only on a different level.

Moon was born in a Christianised area. His parents did not convert to Christianity until 1930. Nevertheless, Moon attended a traditional Confucian school until 1934. According to the highly legendary biographies of the movement (reliable historical material is lacking), the adolescent was a religious seeker for whom his parents' conversion to Presbyterian Christianity did not provide a final answer to his own religious questions. In his search, and because of his psychic gifts (he used to use himself as a medium), Jesus appeared to him. Moon then intensified his religious longing and became a religious fanatic. Yahweh, the great omniscient and omnipotent God, increasingly becomes his role model, and he begins to interpret and understand the contradictions of the Bible to his own advantage. “Isn't it man who doesn't understand God?' he may ask himself again and again. “Haven't people failed again and again and thus destroyed God's good intentions? Did not Adam and Eve, Moses and Jesus disobey God's commandments? Why else is this beautiful world still so imperfect?”

A thought that turns out to be correct leads to a flood of new considerations, deception follows deception, experiences confirm his supposed insights. He is imprisoned, feels innocent and unjustly treated. Soon he hates everything that comes from the Communists, considers them pigs, and is determined to show them the true power of his own great spirit. He laughs when they bring him inedible food, which he refuses; he grows after they torture and humiliate him. He, Moon, was already living on spiritual food given to him by his spiritual helpers.

So he decides, because he is basically a good and helpful person, to help this deeply fallen world with its sinful people. He thinks long and hard about ways and means and counts on God's help. He 'sees' the true intentions of God and the history of mankind in periods of time marked by the numbers three, four and seven and their multiples: From Adam to Noah, 1600 years; from Noah to Abraham, 400 years; the exile of the papacy, 210 years; and from 1520 to 1920, the year of his birth, 400 years.

Enraptured, he murmurs the words: "Madness, incredible, fantastic! Yes, it is true! The time of fulfilment is near, and I am the one who has seen God's plan and will fulfil it.

But there is a long and rocky road between fantasy and fulfilment. Again and again he encounters new difficulties, which he takes as a test from God. He found confirmation for his actions in the Bible. In an internal speech to the leaders of his movement, he explained: “*In 1960, 14 years after the beginning of my public ministry, I celebrated the holy marriage, the marriage of the Lamb, as prophesied in the Bible (Revelation 19). So in 1960 the first heavenly family on earth was established. This corresponds exactly to the moment of Jesus' crucifixion... I have won the first and most important victory: I have fulfilled the heavenly plan. The Son of Heaven came to earth and received the first Bride of Heaven. From that day on, there was the first real base on earth from which God*

could continue His work... In our movement I am now able to restore both the spiritual and physical foundations of Paradise." (Master Speaks, 1 July 1973).

Like many before him, Moon falls prey to biblical ideas. He draws on similar ideas and feels chosen and called to destroy the communists, these alleged agents of Satan. Just as Moses slaughtered entire nations in the name of his God, so Moon sees himself in his visions at the head of an endless army of followers who will defeat the communists under the sign and blessing of God. After this slaughter, there will be eternal peace, which he, Moon, has created for his own eternal glorification.

Those who so grossly misjudge and distort reality will soon see that all means are justified. Tax evasion loses the character of a punishable offence when the evaded funds are used to save souls; going to prison is not seen as a punishment but as a sacrifice for one's fellow human beings who are still sinful. Every reasonable consideration, every objection, no matter how convincing, is twisted and perceived as necessary.

The Factual Report

In the National Library, among other books, I found a book entitled 'Factual Report from the Eternal World for All Peoples of the Earth', which I will call 'Factual Report' for short. It was written by a medium called Griesmayer. The author claimed to be a man called John, who had been a constant companion of Christ. On behalf of all of Christ's disciples, he endeavoured to tell and restore the truth about Christ's life and teachings.

The factual account quickly impressed me for several reasons:

First, he formulated faith as ignorance and the knowledge of truth as a prerequisite for true charity. After my disappointing experiences with religious people, this was balm for my still open wounds.

Secondly, he explained the origin of the worlds in terms of evolution. He answered open questions logically and reasonably, not as fabulously and contradictorily as the Church.

Thirdly, he explained why Christ was hated and nailed to the cross. He said that Christ had called the God of the Jews evil and cruel, and the Jewish scriptures a tissue of lies. As a result, he had increasingly incurred the wrath of the Jewish leaders, who were looking for ways to eliminate him.

Fourthly, the report spoke of the Essenes, from whom Christ had actually come. A few years later, numerous scrolls were found at Qumran, on the Dead Sea near Jerusalem, which underlined the importance of the Essenes, who had previously been mentioned only in passing. In scholarly circles, people began to wonder whether Christ might not have been a non-Jew, descended from a Jewish Essene sect.

Fifthly, the factual report confirms that communication between this world and the next is possible. Neither the editor of the Factual Report, a certain Franz Woller from the seventh district of Vienna, nor the writer Griesmayer could have written the Factual Report, as neither had a scientific education.

After being thrown out of the Society for the Unification of World Christianity, I felt happy again. “What a joy“, I thought, “if the report were true, if it were really possible to receive messages from the past! I wanted to, I had to find out!”

The first thing I tried to do was to check whether the content of the report was really the spiritual work of one or more beings from the beyond. To do this, I first visited the editor, Franz Woller, and soon realised that the elderly gentleman, who was a policeman by profession, could not have been the author of the work. You didn't have to be a linguist to see the enormous stylistic and grammatical difference between Woller's long preface and the rest of the book. Such an report could perhaps have been written by a historian if he had also read and thought a lot about the history of development, physics, geography and other subjects.

Woller told me that a certain Raimund Kubasek had founded an association in the 1920s to research parapsychological phenomena, particularly the question of whether there was life after death. In the spirit of knowledge, he tried to obtain information through

a medium, which he did. Dr Josef Griesmayer, the medium's son, wrote to me about this in a letter dated 5 October 1993:

"*Brother Raimund (all members of the Association considered themselves brothers and sisters) found a medium from his professional circle. False beings took advantage of the first good results and demanded faith again. Brother Raimund did not go along with this and reproached the manifesting beings for their lies. This led to a break with the medium and a large part of the members of the association went with the medium and founded a new association. Only a small number remained with Brother Raimund. He looked for a new medium. My father had psychic abilities (he could feel the radiation of the earth and the human body with his bare hands without any aids), so he offered himself to Brother Raimund as a medium. The training to become a speaking and writing medium was arduous, and as a child I was able to witness the whole development as it took place in our small apartment. Through the search for truth and critical questioning, spiritual beings came who were able to answer the questions asked with scientific precision. Finally, the offer that a witness to the events of some 2000 years ago, namely John the Younger, would write an report of Christ, his life and his teachings*".

At the time of my research, Kubasek had been dead for many years, so I can only judge his personality from the statements of those who knew him and from his writings. At the time of writing, I borrowed his works again from the Austrian National Library and gained the impression that Raimund Kubasek must have been a sincere seeker of truth and an open and honest man. He founded the 'Cosmological Club' in the third district of Vienna and endeavoured to “shed light on the darkness of the secret sciences”. In numerous experiments he tried to find out the truth about communication with the other side and life after death.

In 1922 Kubasek published his 'Ray of Light into the Darkness of the Secret Sciences'. Some time later there was a break between Kubasek and the other side, because Kubasek did not want to accept the teachings and demanded the knowledge of the truth. He then built up the medium Griesmayer and received the medial messages. The medium Griesmayer, whom I visited together with Mr Woller, confirmed Woller's statements. Griesmayer was already over eighty years old and had not been able to be used as a medium for years. Griesmayer was a lovely man who told me many stories, such as how he once drove a tram through the streets of Vienna without realising it. That night he sat down, picked up a pencil and paper and began to write. In the morning, still feeling rested, he was amazed at what he had written. Kubasek took the messages and typed up a few copies.

Years passed, I pondered, studied, discussed and compared with other books. There were moments when I thought I had discovered the truth, then I found another weakness and the search continued. Days of despair followed, and many years later - I was already living in Amaliendorf - the day came when I threw the factual report into the oven. I had had enough; I wanted to free myself; I saw the report as refuted and thought it necessary to wipe the slate clean.

I was able to destroy the paper, but not the thoughts inside me. More years passed and I asked my brother Richard for the report I had once given him. Having matured, I believed I could see things more clearly again. Once again I was on the verge of accepting the report. Then a Dr. Paulus called me, who in the meantime had published the factual

report in book form. I also met the medium's son, Dr Griesmayer, and another doctor who was a friend of Paulus. Now the final liberation from the report came faster than I could have imagined. Paulus and his devoted friend were not willing to discuss it, and I once again saw certain practical effects of the teachings contained in the factual report. Once again, I urged the assembled group not to take anything, not even the factual report, for granted, but to do more research and keep an open mind:

“What is the sense and value of accepting and spreading this new book as a kind of new book religion?” I urged. “Some of the statements in the report are uncertain, and none of what is predicted for the future has actually happened yet!”

“You don't have to take the report so literally, dear Sauerschnig,” Paul explained without a trace of uncertainty. "It will take a long time for people to understand the spirit of the factual report!"

“But it is written in the factual report that the Spirit of Truth will rise again after 2000 years, that some people will recognise it and pass it on to mankind. Some nations will accept what has been recognised and then the others will follow. Peace and Truth will come into this world!”

"Dear Sauerschnig, I appreciate that you take the factual report so literally, but you see too narrowly. I have the spiritual greatness to see these things correctly. Everything will come, not in our time, perhaps in a few hundred years. Have you read my book about it?”

When someone spoke of spiritual greatness, I reacted very negatively. Woller also thought he was a great man. He talked about his spiritual vision reaching into eternity. He also thought he was a great spirit because he had supposedly had a spiritual experience with Christ. But from what I had seen of him, he was little more than average intelligence. The books and pamphlets he was so keen to write were so repulsive that I could only leaf through them.

The factual report did not mention the possibility that the factual report might not be accepted for several hundred years. Woller was already disappointed that despite his efforts and the many books he had sent, nothing had happened. Even Kubasek, according to Woller, died in discord with the beings of the other world.

Even then I knew how easily people can err and how time can change their ideas. I suspect that there are not only enough spiritual beings in the hereafter who first think they are Napoleon, but I have also heard of dozens who claim to be Jesus, Christ or Jesus Christ, without realising what banalities they usually utter.

I have to admit that I often have difficulty remembering events and conversations that took place 25 or more years ago, so that I can only reproduce quotations in a sense, and rarely literally. With each new year, memories fade, and I would rather not know what I would write in another 25 years, despite my efforts to always tell the truth.

“We need to talk about whether the factual report was written by beings who were unaware of their error, however unimaginable that may seem to us.” I tried to argue. “We don't know how the events of 2000 years ago were recorded. Did the beings in the afterlife write down and archive Christ's speeches? Why didn't Christ's disciples keep better records

and bury them for posterity if they knew from Christ's speeches exactly how the evil one would cause trouble in the spirit? Or were they just reproducing what Christ might have said after 2000 years?"

No one was prepared to entertain such a sacrilegious thought. Seeing the futility of the situation, I said goodbye and left.

I retained the idea that all belief is a form of ignorance and that truth can only be found in the recognition of facts. The factual report and my subsequent studies made me realise that the Jewish God is a cruel being, hard, unjust, vicious, mean and merciless. I also maintained, because it is simply my nature, that the world can only be transformed through love, understanding, equality and justice. But it was not only in the report that I found such sublime thoughts.

For a long time I wondered what I could write about a person as significant as Jesus Christ. On the one hand, he influenced world history like no other and shaped the destinies of millions upon millions of people. On the other hand, we do not find a single line written by him. Could he not read and write, or could he write but did not write, or did he write but his writings were lost or destroyed?

Whichever way you look at it, it is not good that we find no writings by Christ, who was supposedly able to perform miracles. If he could bring the dead back to life, then it cannot have been so difficult for him to put his ideas and intentions down on paper and keep them safe for posterity. If the Essenes were able to preserve hundreds of scrolls into the twentieth century, then Christ and his disciples could have done at least as well. Or are there writings that are hidden from the public?

Why is there not a single line written by his many disciples? What did the apostles do? Did they just listen to their great master, or did they write to make sure they didn't forget anything? Confucius, Laozi and Buddha soon had disciples who sought to preserve their masters' thoughts for the future. And the all-powerful Christ, who could see into the past and the future, the supposed Son of God, was supposed to have been so stupid as not to preserve his teachings for the future?

It is hard to believe that Christ and/or his disciples and contemporaries did not write down much of what they said in letters, notes and works. Some of what was written was lost, and the rest was ruthlessly destroyed.

In the absence of authentic writings, and in view of the need for a critique of the writings and forgeries, I think it appropriate to juxtapose the ecclesiastical traditions with some statements from the factual report. Perhaps a miracle will happen and people will think and research about the life and work of Christ openly, objectively, without prejudice and without murder and manslaughter.

Using the factual report as an example, I hope to show how one can err in the spirit of knowledge and cause harm without evil intent. From the factual report you can see, if you wish, how the spirits of truth can err when they think they can attach truth to a person and capture it in a book.

The 'truth' about Christ

The Factual Report claims *that Christ was not born of Jewish parents*. Mary, Joseph and Christ's disciples were Essenes. These claims are strangely supported by numerous scrolls found between 1947 and 1956 at Qumran on the Dead Sea, about 30 kilometres from Jerusalem. Legend has it that a young shepherd boy from a Bedouin tribe, looking for a goat, found an opening in a rock face and a cave below. Inside the cave were several clay pots containing scrolls. Later, more caves were discovered and a total of several hundred scrolls were found.

I bought the first complete German translation by *Dr Johann Maier* and read about the spirits of light and the reign of Belial (Satan), about the origin of man according to all kinds of spirits, about the god of knowledge and so on. I couldn't make sense of the translations, but at least I got confirmation that the statements in the factual report could not have been invented by Kubasek or Griesmayer - such ideas could not have been in their heads!

In 1995 or 1996 I came across a critical report by *Michael Baigent* and *Richard Leigh* entitled 'The Jesus Secret' and subtitled 'The Qumran Scrolls and the Truth about Christianity'. It describes how a so-called 'international group' of scholars, set up by the highest echelons of the Church, defends its monopoly on the interpretation of the texts by any means necessary and silences all those scholars who do not adhere to an early 'agreement'. The authors try to explain why 75 per cent of the 800 or so manuscripts written in ancient Hebrew and Aramaic are withheld from the public. Despite this, many copies of the sealed scrolls have been smuggled out and carefully examined by the authors and academic experts. "*These documents show that the beginnings of Christianity have been misinterpreted. There are also passages from the New Testament that are surprisingly different from the versions we know. And they show the early Christian community and Jesus of Nazareth in a new light.*" This is a brief summary of the book's cover.

The factual report goes on to say that after a period of many millions of years of human existence, during which people knew the eternal as well as the true meaning and purpose of earthly existence, peoples came into this world who were less devoted to knowledge than to faith, and who worshipped different gods. However, these peoples could still distinguish between good and evil. Their religious cult consisted of serving the good gods through acts of charity, while fearing and protecting themselves from the evil gods through sacrifice. Their more childlike faith and relatively good character did not allow them to confuse evil with good, or lie with truth.

There was also a people, we are told, who believed in only one God. This supposed God told the leaders of this people, through communications in his spirit through intermediaries, that he was the sole creator of the world and of life on earth, and that they alone should worship, adore and serve him. The leaders and the people believed such messages, delivered in a prophetic spirit, and worshipped this spirit being as God, willingly accepting his offer to call the chosen people of God. The entity that claimed to be God then entered into a bloody covenant with the people through its mediators and, under terrible threats and curses, enacted laws that hypocritically concealed lies, wickedness and bloodlust, and that forced its chosen people to rob, murder or enslave other peoples, whom it itself chose. He demanded that his people constantly sacrifice to him animals that had been slaughtered in a torturous manner, and that he destroy any human being who dared

to deny him as a god or to consider the effect and activity in his mind to be false and evil.

According to the facts, around the time of Christ's birth, there were scattered all over the world larger and smaller groups of people whose common pursuit was the cultivation of free knowledge, the knowledge of eternal life and of the Eternal, whom they recognised as the greatest and most spiritually perfect of all spiritual beings. These people were Essenes, considered themselves brothers and sisters, and addressed each other as 'brother' or 'sister'. They maintained contact with spiritual beings from the beyond and were aware that the time was near when the Eternal One himself would come as a human being and speak to men in his Spirit of Truth.

Thus there were several Essene communities in the land of Judea and Galilee who, informed by the intermediaries of the coming events, formed a close spiritual community and were in constant contact with each other. They were tolerated by the other peoples. Only the Jews are said to have been hostile to them. They tried to harm them and threatened their lives.

In Nazareth there lived a brother called Joseph Aramaeus, who was a carpenter by trade and the leader of the local Essene community. Around this time he fled with Mary to Egypt to escape persecution by the Jews, who had learned of the imminent birth of Christ. On the way, Christ was born and remained in Egypt until he was seven years old, later teaching among other peoples.

Christ is said to have spent the last period of his ministry in Jerusalem and the surrounding area. There he is said to have healed the sick, analysed the Jewish legal code and portrayed Yahweh as Satan (!). When the space in the city became too small for the large crowds, Pilate is said to have asked him to hold his sermons outside the city wall at Herod's Gate. According to John, he is said to have picked apart the Jewish legal code on the hill of Salem in front of thousands of people, including many Jewish leaders and rabbis. I offer some extracts from Christ's discourses to give an idea of how the Jewish leaders' deadly hatred of Christ might have arisen.

Christ Explains the Old Testament

I quote:

The writing of this liar begins:

In the beginning God created heaven and earth, but the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. God made the light and saw that it was good. He called the light day and the darkness night. On the second day God divided the waters from the waters and made the firmament. He called the firmament the sky. On the third day God gathered together the waters that were under the heaven and called the dry land Earth; and he saw that it was good. And he said, 'Let the earth bring forth grass, which shall be green, and bring forth seed; and let fruit trees, which shall yield their fruit, and their seed be in them. And God saw that it was good. On the fourth day God made the lights in the sky to divide the day from the night; two great lights, the greater to rule the day and the lesser to rule the night; and the stars; and he saw that it was good. On the fifth day, God made the moving creatures with living souls out of the water and the birds above the earth, and then the

great sea monsters. He blessed them and saw that they were good. On the sixth day God created the animals of the earth according to their kind, the tame cattle, the creeping things, the wild animals and man in the image of God to have dominion over everything. God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his face the breath of life; he put him in the Garden of Eden.

On the seventh day God rested from his work. He blessed and sanctified the day and perhaps washed his hands of the last work in the creation of man, which he had soiled with mud and clay.

Now consider how stupid this tale of lies about creation invented by Moses and his God is. This poor God first created the earth and the light of day and the living plants on it, and then he made the lights in the sky, including the shining sun and the moon. A child would laugh at these stupid lies and wonder what this God made the animals out of, and what the excrement of the earth must be like to turn into a living human body with a single breath.

According to this pack of lies, plants, worms and animals had two sexes. Only in the case of man had this god of lies forgotten to create gender. The poor man had to look for a helper among the animals, but he found none. So the forgetful Creator had no choice but to create a helper for man who would be like him, to replace the animal. He put the man into a deep sleep, took a rib from him, closed the wound with flesh and made a woman out of it. This time the God of Lies did not want to stain himself with filth and did not want to make the effort to breathe the breath of life into the face of the woman. That is why the servants of this creator of lies consider woman to be the subject of man and not his equal...

Consider the scriptures further and look at the garden of pleasure that the alleged God has planted. As well as gold and precious jewels, the garden had many trees that were beautiful to look at and whose fruit was delicious to eat. Among them were the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

So the God who creates from nothing took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to take care of it and to keep it. He commanded him, "You may freely eat of any tree of the garden, but you must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die." Then the creator, curious to hear what the man called the beasts and his helper, listened to him. They were both naked and not ashamed, but the serpent was more cunning than all the animals in the world that this god had created out of nothing. It said to the woman, "Why did God tell you not to eat of any tree in the garden?" And the woman said unto the serpent, "We must not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither must we touch the tree, lest we die." And the serpent said unto the woman, "Ye shall not surely die. For God shall know you when you eat of it, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eye, and pleasant to the sight. She took some of its fruit, ate it and gave some to her husband, who also ate it. Then their eyes were opened, and when they saw that they were naked, they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.

Look at this stupid story of lies! What does he who calls himself God but is Satan want to achieve? He is presenting the naked human body with its sexual structure as something to be ashamed of and looking at each other as a crime!

I have explained to you the origin, reason, purpose and meaning of sex on earth. You scribes, priests and rabbis know this, yet you hypocritically wrap yourselves in the lies of your scriptures. Yet each of you has five to ten wives who are completely disenfranchised and whom you buy and sell like animals.

At this, the scribes, superiors and rabbis began to grumble and curse. One of them shouted at Christ: ”We have our god and act according to his law. But you blaspheme our god because you are poor!”

Christ replied:

Yes, this liar wants to be your God and you want to be his servants. You like to follow his law because it offers you earthly advantages at the expense of the poor and the seduced.

Let us take a closer look at your god and his laws. The first of his laws forbids man, on pain of death, to know good and evil, lest his lies and his wickedness be known.

How untrustworthy this God is is shown by the blatant lie that a snake - that is, an animal that by its very nature cannot speak at all - had to come and tell people that there is eternal life and that, as a cognitive being, it can recognise good and evil. So even his own snake lies to him and proves that there is no death, but there is truth.

According to this text, this God walked in the garden in the cool of the afternoon and called the human couple to account for transgressing his commandment. He dealt first with the man, then with the woman, and finally with the serpent, swearing and dictating punishments. He ordered the snake, which by nature has no feet and always crawls on the ground, to crawl on its belly from now on. He also ordered it to eat dust every day, which it has not done to this day. Then he put enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent, and the serpent shall pierce the heel of the woman. And she shall be tormented with the pains of childbirth, and she shall bring forth children in pain, and she shall be subject to the power of her husband, who shall rule over her. Because of the man, whom he now called Adam because he had been tempted by the woman, he cursed the earth and then said to him: "With much toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will bear thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the herbs of the earth until you return to the earth, for you are earth and will become earth again.”

Think how stupid this lie is and how full of malice and vengeance it is. But that's not all; this God's punishment continues... This God and Lord then expels Adam from the beautiful Garden of Eden and places cherubim with flaming swords in front of the Garden to guard the way to the Tree of Life.

See what ignorance these lies breed among men, and how you elders and rabbis take advantage of this ignorance! You hypocrites and blind guides who walk in the 'darkness of lies' and block the path of those who seek the 'light of truth' with cunning, hypocrisy, violence, punishment and revenge, are the greatest spiritual scum; you consciously act in lies and create evil for yourselves for time and eternity!

Let us continue in this book of lies and fairy tales!

The woman whom Adam called Eve is said to have given birth to two sons, Cain and Abel. As soon as these four people lived on earth, the killing and sacrificing began. God began to curse Cain for killing his brother. Cain then went to another land and there he recognised his wife, who bore him a son. Why he was able to find a wife in a strange land when there were only three people on earth is not explained in the Scriptures.

The lies of your god are getting thicker and thicker. So now follows a genealogy from Adam to Noah, how one begat the other - even at the age of eight hundred years and more - and how a Methusalah is said to have been nine hundred and sixty-nine years old.

Then this God suddenly regretted that he had made man on earth, and his heart was sad. He decided to destroy all living things, from man to worm. Only Noah found favour with him. According to his plan, Noah had to build an ark for himself and his family, which was to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high, and in which he had to put seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of unclean animals, together with the necessary food. When Noah had completed the ark and entered with the animals, God shut him in. Then he opened the floodgates of the sky and opened the wells, so that everything on earth that had a breath was drowned, except Noah and his animals.

What do you scribes, elders and rabbis have to say about this horror story?

Tell me, how could Noah have accommodated in this relatively small ark one or seven pairs of each of the earth's animals, together with the food necessary for them, for one hundred and fifty days?

Think about the impossibility of accommodating all the world's animal species in such a way, and admit how silly the story of Noah is.

After the cruel story of Noah, there is another genealogy to make people believe that all humans descended from Noah and that Adam and his wife Eve were the first humans. Names and peoples were mentioned, such as the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites, who lived contentedly in this region twenty thousand years ago, when there were no Hebrews on earth.

I tell you, these peoples were Essenes and were very close to the truth about me and eternal life. It was only when your fathers, at the command of their god, attacked them, murdered them and plundered them. The Jebusite people lived here in this land. The foundations of your greatest temple in this city, where the liar and deceiver has his sanctuary, are the remains of the House of Truth of the ancient Jebusites.

At this the chief priests and rabbis began to shout, and some of them cried out to the people: “This one calls our sanctuary, which our fathers built for our god, unclean. This blasphemer should be stoned to death on the spot!”

Christ went on speaking and answered them:

Yes, my words of truth hurt you. But I must show the people the lies of your writings, so that they may know what evil spirit you follow. The words of your scriptures prove that once he begins to lie, he goes from one lie to another. Then he tries to cover up one lie with another.

Hear what value your God places on your *foreskin* when he says:

You shall circumcise the flesh of the foreskin of every male among you, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you and your descendants after you, for an everlasting covenant. On the eighth day you shall be circumcised; every male among you who is born in the house, or who is bought, and is not of your tribe, shall be circumcised. This covenant upon your flesh shall be for an everlasting covenant. If a male is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, his soul shall be cut off, for he has broken my covenant.

Behold the spirit that devises and demands such things! Decide for yourselves whether there can be a greater spiritual abomination than this god. But you reverently carry out his bloody wishes and thus satisfy his base desires. By calling this spiritual abomination god, you yourselves admit that you want to be the same as this liar.

The covenants and bargains of this god continue. So he says to Abraham:

“You shall no longer call your wife Sarai, but Sarah. For I will bless you and give you a son by her.” Then Abraham fell on his face, laughed at this god and said: “How can a son be born to a man of a hundred years? Sarah is ninety years old and cannot bear children.” But this God continued to speak: “Yes, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. For I will establish my covenant with him after him for ever.” It is said that in return for the many promises, Abraham made all men undergo horrible mutilations, and that God's abominable lust was satisfied by the blood and pain.

It is also written that Abraham was visited by three men who were angels of god, and he gave them water to wash their feet. He entertained them with cakes of ashes and a roasted calf prepared with milk and butter. Then the three inquired where his wife Sarah was. Sarah was in the tent, and when she heard them talking about the birth of a son, she laughed and said: “Now that I have grown old, and my master has grown old, shall I still have lust?”

Listen to the witty conversation of the angels of this God with Abraham and Sarah. These alleged angels spoke only of pleasure, of giving birth, of washing feet, of cakes of ashes, of roasting veal with butter and milk.

Yes, as the villain thinks, so is he and so does he create! (End of quote).

According to the factual report, Moses really did live and through the media (prophets) wrote the scriptures about creation, Adam and Eve, Abraham, etc. with his god Yahweh. Unfortunately, it took me a relatively long time to learn that the history of Judaism did not unfold as the Old Testament and many believers would have us believe. *Gerd Lüdemann*, Professor of the History and Literature of Early Christianity at the University of Göttingen, states in his work 'Altes Testament und christliche Kirche':

"*No book of Moses was written by Moses, no psalm of David by David, no proverb of Solomon by Solomon, no vision of Daniel by Daniel, very few words of the prophets by the prophets under whose names the books have been handed down. There was no exodus from Egypt, no revelation at Sinai and no giving of the Ten Commandments.*

Abraham, Isaac, Moses and Joshua are mere names; Jericho was never conquered. These sentences cannot be repeated often enough, because the opposite has been part of a sacred past for almost 2000 years, which has served church officials and politicians to maintain their power."

A comparison with other sources on the Internet shows that other historians are also aware that the historical accounts contained in the Old Testament are fabulous and implausible. For example, the Internet encyclopaedia Wikipedia (chapter 'History of Israel') says of the so-called Exodus from Egypt:

"*However, a mass exodus as described in the Bible seems hardly possible, especially if the Pharaoh knew about it and tried to prevent it militarily. The land of Canaan itself was at least partly occupied by Egyptians, and there were several Egyptian fortresses with entire garrisons along the route, so an escape from Egypt would have ended in Egypt again.*

The route that the Israelites supposedly took to Canaan cannot be reconstructed exactly, despite the biblical description of the route. The exact locations of the Jam-suf (Red Sea) and Mount Sinai are also unclear. This is also cited by some scholars as evidence that there was probably no significant 'exodus from Egypt'.

According to the biblical account, it was Moses who led the Israelites out of Egypt. He, whose existence is also doubted by historians, is still considered the most important prophet in Judaism."

I have long been aware that fairy tales can be invented and turned into historical sources. The realisation that a person like Moses was also an invention did not shock me. But I realised that the statements about the life of the Israelites in Egypt, their exodus, the origin of the Ten Commandments, etc., which are put into the mouth of Christ in the factual report, can only be pure fantasy or invention. And that really shakes me over and over again, that people - whether in this world or in the next - can be so misled and deceived that they invent 'truths' full of conviction that could never have happened that way.

You can say, 'What do I care about the factual report', but you can't dismiss it so easily. Similar deceptions and aberrations can be found in many areas, you just don't notice them! I don't want to give examples because I don't want to offend anyone and because the spiritual aberrations and deceptions are not only related to religion, esotericism, etc., but to the general way of thinking by which people live and are governed in today's world.

If Christianity does not scandalize you, you do not know it!

The factual account describes how Christ's provocative statements were increasingly drawing the wrath of the Jewish leaders. So they were looking for a good opportunity to get rid of Christ.

There is no doubt that the Jewish leaders wanted to get rid of Christ. The Bible itself repeatedly confirms this fact. According to the Gospel of Mark (14:1), "*the chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest and kill Jesus in secret*".

Pilate and Herod, who under normal circumstances would not have been so concerned about the life of a non-Roman, cannot go along with the opinion of the assembled leaders of the Jewish people, nor can they be intimidated by the angry crowd. They believe that Jesus is innocent and want to set him free. The *Gospel of Luke* tells us (23:13):

"Pilate called together the chief priests, the other elders and the crowd and said to them: You brought me this man because you said he was stirring up the crowd. I myself interrogated him in your presence and found no case against him in all the charges you brought against him. Nor did Herod; he sent him back to us. They all cried together, 'Away with him!' But Pilate turned to them again, wanting to release Jesus. But they cried out, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!'"

That apparently not only Jesus but also his disciples were unwelcome persons can be seen from chapter 4 of the *Acts of the Apostles* (there are many other passages that say the same thing). Peter and John were arrested after Christ's death because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead:

"While they were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them. They were indignant because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They arrested them and kept them in custody until the next morning."

In Matthew, but also in Mark and Luke, we can read how Jesus spoke to the crowd and warned them about the scribes and Pharisees:

"Beware of the scribes! They like to walk around in long robes, they love to be greeted in the marketplaces, they have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. They devour widows' houses and say long prayers for the sake of their hypocrisy." (Luke 20:45-47)

"You Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside you are full of extortion and self-indulgence. "(Luke 11:39)

"Woe to you! For you are like tombs which are not seen, and those who walk over them are not aware of them." (Luke 11:44)

When a lawyer also felt offended by such reproaches, Jesus added:

"Woe to you lawyers! You lay burdens on people that they can hardly bear, but you yourselves do not lift a finger to help them. Woe to you! You build monuments to the prophets whom your fathers killed. So you confirm and approve what your fathers did. They killed the prophets, and you build their tombs" (Luke 11:46-48).

Finally, Christ threatens that all will be avenged on this generation. He reproached the teachers of the law for not using the door of knowledge and for preventing those who wanted to enter from doing so. When Jesus had left the house, the scribes and Pharisees began to press him with many questions, trying to trap him in his own words. Meanwhile, thousands of people were gathering, creating a dangerous crowd. Jesus turned first to his disciples and said, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." He encouraged his friends not to be afraid of their oppressors: "But to you, my friends, I say: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot do anything to you." (Luke 12).

There is no doubt that there were massive differences of opinion between Jesus on the one hand and the Jewish leaders, elders, scribes, Pharisees and teachers of the law on the other. One wonders why Jesus repeatedly spoke out against the Jewish leaders and their laws with such apparent persistence.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus was a friend of the people and wanted to help them. He comforted them, healed their sick, fed them, brought the dead back to life and warned them that the rulers were their seducers. Jesus obviously wanted to win the people to his cause and ideas, risking the wrath and trouble of the leaders of the people.

The factual account says that the Essenes were gentiles. However, this claim is hardly accurate. The numerous scrolls found at Qumran on the Dead Sea show that the Essenes were more like a Jewish sect. *Ahmed Osman*, in his book 'Who Was Jesus Really', writes about the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Essenes: "*The scrolls turned out to be part of the library of the Essenes, a secret Jewish sect. They had separated from the Jewish community and the Jerusalem priesthood, whose beliefs and teachings they rejected as false*."

It is even less likely that there were Essenes among all the nations. The claim of the factual report that Christ was in India to visit the local Essene communities is not supported by a single document.

According to the current state of research, it is most likely that Jesus came from the Jewish sect of the Essenes and developed an increasing aversion to the Jewish leaders. He felt more and more like the liberator and redeemer of the Jewish people, probably had a persuasive manner, a sharp mind and remarkable oratory skills. He probably also had certain healing powers and was able to heal by his word (his will).

The factual report claims that Christ is the greatest being in spirit who made life possible for all other living beings. I reject discussions about 'great minds' as a matter of principle. However, I think it is very unlikely that Christ created the conditions for all living things to live. Life probably developed gradually, and human beings - and therefore Christ - came very much later.

About the Church

There have always been, and still are, voices pointing out the rotten foundations of the Church. Universities teach how much has been falsified and how many 'truths of faith' were preceded by fights and disputes before they were labelled as the will of God. The masses of the people also feel that something is wrong; they know that Christ was a man dressed simply, a man who rejected purple caps and sumptuous garments, and who preferred the lodgings of the common man to the noble lodgings of the rich. Everyone feels that dirty thoughts and shameful deeds cannot be cleansed by the forgiveness of sins, and that confession can only be a means of discovering the most secret thoughts. Many know what happened in the sign of the cross, how fabulous the biblical story of creation is, and how much guilt the Church has incurred. And yet, wherever the Holy Father appears, crowds gather!

The Church is not dead and the critique of religion cannot be considered finished, as Karl Marx thought. Marx is dead, but the Church is alive and celebrating its resurrection in former communist areas.

What has happened to people who, on the one hand, think so logically and realistically and can achieve incredible things, and who, on the other hand, flock by the hundreds of thousands to wherever the highest bishop in the world goes? What has happened to people that they can act so contradictorily?

It is an old but successful trick: you use a figurehead, preach about justice and truth, about charity and brotherhood, about equality and humanity, make a pious and compassionate face and point your finger. Then you raise your hand to be kissed, send the bag round and return to your official duties. Now it is important to increase the number of souls, increase the power of the church, collect money and more money, tame unruly people, manage and increase assets, develop policies, make decisions and eliminate those who stand in the way of the interests of the church.

What does *Joachim Kahl* write in his work 'The Misery of Christianity'? "*The need for a new critique of Christianity and theology arises from the simple fact that they persist. The ray of reason must be directed anew against the representatives of religion today, who profit from the universal tendency to forget.*"

Joachim Kahl, born in Cologne in 1941, studied theology and received his doctorate in theology from the Philipps University of Marburg at a time when he had already begun his reckoning with the Church. "*This book is a pamphlet*," he writes in his introduction. "*It cannot and will not hide its polemical intention. It was written in a prolonged fit of intellectual obsession. I do not share the bourgeois prejudice that rational criticism can only be presented in a cool and detached manner. I did not write sine ira et studio, but cum ira et cum studio, with the anger coming of itself after sufficient study. Those who are not outraged by Christianity do not know it.*"

My concern is for the human being who is sacrificed on the altar of a God whom I deeply detest. *Franz Overbeck*, the famous professor of theology in Basel, confessed at the end of his career: "*I may well say that Christianity has cost me my life.*" Who has the courage and the strength, after completing his theological studies, to throw everything away and start again?

Gustav Wyneken, the eminent German pedagogue (1875-1964), who studied theology for a few semesters, spent decades studying the biblical traditions and their Christian interpretation. In his work 'Farewell to Christianity' he fights for honesty and truthfulness and against hypocrisy and thoughtless conformism. "*Astute textual analysis and all the methods of scientific-critical philosophy and historical research allow only one conclusion,*" the book says. "*The New Testament is not Holy Scripture, not historiography, but literature, and propaganda literature at that. Christian theologians are aware of these findings and yet continue to proclaim the Christian faith. Lay believers know almost nothing about this loss of credibility of their faith. Nor can they say why they believe in the first place. Most Christians today discard their critical reason and their sharpened scepticism in the religious sphere, which they demonstrate as 'secular people': they insist on believing in an attitude that is completely outdated and contradictory in the rest of their lives*".

Kahl, in his understandable anger, is even harsher: "*The New Testament is a manifesto of inhumanity, a large-scale mass deception; it suffocates people instead of educating them about their objective interests.*"

"*Christianity, like its younger brother, co-heir and competitor, Islam, emerged from the Jewish religion,*" Wyneken says. "*These three religions did not develop gradually, but were founded. They had a datable, historical beginning. The other great religions of antiquity, such as the Babylonian, Egyptian and Greek religions, were nature religions. Their main gods were embodiments of the forces of nature, natural phenomena, natural laws that fill space and are eternally the same.*

Christianity is very different. It has no 'book of natural secrets'; it is not interested in nature, it completely ignores it. It does not fit into the great human line of unravelling the world; it selfishly breaks out of the solidarity of human destiny and human endeavour. 'Cosmos', the Greek word for the wonderfully ordered universe, becomes a kind of insult in Christianity: the evil world from which one must flee, and religion is the way of this flight, opened to man through the incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus.

We should actually eliminate the word 'Bible' from our thinking, if not from our speech," Wyneken explains. *"This well-known, thick, ancient book is in fact not a single work at all, but a motley collection of literary monuments from more than a thousand years, completely inconsistent with each other and bound together not only by the bookbinder, but by the will of two religious communities who arranged this collection and decided to see in it the documents of their faith.*

Even linguistically, the word "Bible" is a misnomer, or at least based on a misunderstanding. The German word comes from the Greek 'biblia' (plural!), which means 'books', via Latin. It was only in the Middle Ages, when people in the West no longer studied Greek, that 'biblia' gradually came to be understood as a singular: 'the Bible', and it was increasingly forgotten that this book is not an organic unity, but a conglomerate, made up of many components, very different and with different values."

The Church built its 'New Testament' on the model of the 'Old Testament', which contains the books of Moses and other writings of prophets and kings. The New Testament contains the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the didactic writings of the Apostles. Since Jesus was presented as the Son of Yahweh, the Old Testament became from the beginning a divine revelation that was also binding on Christians.

There is not a single written line from Christ himself, and the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John were not actually written by the Lord's apostles. Herder's 'Theological Commentary on the New Testament', a work that really cannot be said to have been written by an anti-church author, says the following about the time and authorship of the Gospels and Acts:

"The Gospel of Luke was written after the year 70 AD. The decade between 80 and 90 AD will be the correct time for the writing of the Acts of the Apostles."

"Like all 'gospels' - as the writings based on the Gospel of Mark came to be called - the Gospel of Mark was undoubtedly first published *anonymously*. The year 70 is given as the date of composition."

"The Gospel of Matthew was written anonymously around 80 AD."

The various writings are, of course, also full of contradictions, which I will not go into in detail. Just one example: according to only two gospels, Christ was born of the Virgin Mary; according to the other two, he was not.

In his 'Criminal History of Christianity', *Karlheinz Deschner* writes about the large-scale, organised falsifications of the Church: "*Many, perhaps most, people are afraid to suspect the grossest fraud in what is for them the most 'sacred' of all areas. Yet never has there been more unscrupulous, more frequent lying and cheating than in the realm of religion.*"

According to Wynekens, the Gospel of Mark was written around 70, the Gospel of Matthew around 90, the Gospel of Luke around 100 and the Gospel of John around 140. The Acts of the Apostles, probably written by Luke (but no one knows who Luke was, as the Gospels were published anonymously), were written after 100. The 1st and 2nd Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude are forgeries; other Epistles are suspected of being forgeries; the integrity and completeness of some writings is doubtful; insertions and additions by later hands are suspected here and there. Only the *Pauline epistles* appear to be authentic.

Apostle Paul

But who was Paul?

Paul was a Jewish leader whose real name was Saul. He hated Christ deeply and persecuted him and his followers along with other Jewish leaders. The book of Acts tells us how fanatically Saul raged against Christians even after Christ's death (Acts 8:1-3): "On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem. All were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. The believers buried Stephen and mourned for him. *But Saul sought to destroy the Church; he went into every house and dragged off men and women and put them in prison*".

The Acts of the Apostles (9:1-22) tells us how Saul raged against the disciples of the Lord, full of murderous thoughts. "*Saul continued to rage against the Lord's disciples, threatening and killing them. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues of Damascus, so that he might arrest the followers of the new way, both men*

and women, and bring them to Jerusalem." But Jesus, who would have had many opportunities during his lifetime to convert Saul to Paul, appeared to him on the road and asked him why he was persecuting him. Then Paul saw nothing, ate nothing, drank no water for three days, and prayed. So the Lord had no choice but to appear again, this time to Ananias, a disciple of the Lord in Damascus. Ananias replied that he knew Saul and his evil spirit very well. But the Lord did not give up and said that he would make this tireless persecutor of his spirit his chosen instrument (!). When Ananias finally did what he was told, it was as if the scales had fallen from Saul's eyes and he could see again; he stood up and was baptised.

What was the point of this apparent deception? What purpose did it serve?

It is not difficult to see that a major deception was underway. Obviously the Jewish leaders were looking for new, more promising ways to harm the Christian movement. With a new identity (Paul), money, the secret support of the Jewish leaders, and an elaborate story about the appearance of the Lord, he began to conjure up more news about Christ. Of course, he was not immediately believed. The Acts of the Apostles (9:1-22) tells us: "*But when he came to Jerusalem, he sought to enter into the company of the disciples, and* ***all were afraid of him, because they did not believe that he was a disciple.***"

It is easy to understand the disputes that have come down to us about the early Church. Soon many did not know what Christ had really said, and more and more people tended to believe the version spread by the pious and hypocritical Paul, who, thanks to the means at his disposal, was able to emphasise the meaning of his words with bread and wine, which he could even *transform into the flesh and blood of the Lord* in his ceremonies.

The church father *Clement Alexandrinus* (died around 150) pointed to the confused situation of the Christian groups when he lamented that Jews and pagans rejected conversion "because, in view of the confusing doctrinal disputes among the Christian parties, one cannot know which of them really represents the truth". *Origen*, also one of the first Fathers of the Church (died around 254), admits that "there are so many among those who profess to believe in Christ who disagree not only on trivial and insignificant matters, but also on the important and weighty main points."

Not even the position of Christ was agreed upon. The so-called Trinitarian interpretation, with Father, Son and Holy Spirit, came about after terrible disputes in a church assembly, now politely called a 'council'. The Roman Emperor Constantine was tired of the eternal religious disputes. He called the rival and warring groups together and demanded that they finally agree on a single view of God and Christ. It was at this meeting, which resembled a Nazi brawl more than a civilised discussion, that the Creed was formulated. Since then, countless "I believe in God, the Father, the Almighty, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son..." have been sent to Yahweh.

In fact, there are – how could it be otherwise? – many different versions of the Creed, so one should not think that the bishops at the synods were so inspired by the Holy Spirit that they immediately found the right wording. Studying these different versions is time-consuming and not very effective. In the 'Compendium of the Creeds and Doctrines of the Church', those interested can at best find information on the 'Coptic Version', the 'Ethiopian Version in Question Form', the 'Ethiopian Version in Statement Form', the 'Baptismal Creed of the Armenian Church', the 'Apostles' Creed', the 'Oriental Formulas',

and so on.

The religious controversy did not end with the Council of Nicaea; synods followed synods.

With the onset of the Germanic migrations and the increasing threat to the Roman Empire, the church movement won a decisive victory. It succeeded in persuading the irascible emperor Theodosius to declare the Church the state religion and to ban the practice of pagan religions.

The power of the Church grew in the centuries that followed. Soon emperors and kings had to seek the favour of the popes themselves, for only the pope could bestow God's grace and thus the trappings of temporal dignity. The monk Hildebrand, who became Pope Gregory VII. (1073-1085), even aspired to a papal empire. After Gregory VII. set out his spiritual programme for rule in the Papal Dictate (Dictatus Papae of 1075), an open struggle broke out between Gregory VII. and King Henry IV. Henry IV. rejected Gregory's demands and called for a battle against his pro-ecclesiastical opponents, which he lost. The disputes continued and led to Gregory VII. issuing the ban of the king, which freed all subjects from the oath of allegiance and forbade the king to rule the realm. Henry IV. had to travel to Italy and appear before the Pope in a hair shirt, whereupon Pope Gregory had no choice but to lift the ban on the repentant king. In 1080 Gregory renewed the ban, and Henry IV. responded with such military force that Gregory VII. was forced to flee to his Norman allies.

In the Middle Ages, intellectual dullness became increasingly intolerable. All criticism was stifled. The Inquisition was born, one of the most brutal terrorist organisations the world has ever known: The Protestant church historian *Walter Nigg* writes: "*To the assertion that it wasn't so bad, one can only reply: Yes, it was bad, as bad as it could be!*"

Initially, the Inquisition was the task of the bishops and their synods, who appointed a few laymen in each parish to track down 'heretics'. When this failed to 'purify' the Church, Pope Gregory IX. finally transformed the Inquisition into a centrally controlled institution of the Curia, transferring it (in 1232) to the Dominicans ('domini canes' - 'dogs of the Lord', in the vernacular).

As a rule, the Inquisition announced its visit to each city in advance, so that the population could gather in time. Anyone who did not turn up was automatically under serious suspicion. Every Catholic was obliged to denounce 'heretical' Christians; parents had to denounce their children, children their parents and spouses each other. Anyone who failed to do so was an accomplice. Anonymous denunciations were preferred.

The heresy trial began with the arrest. The accused was found guilty from the start. He was put in chains in a dungeon. He was denied the sacraments. The accused had to swear to the inquisitor, who was accuser, judge and confessor in one person, to obey all the commandments of the Church, to answer all questions truthfully, to betray all fellow heretics and to willingly accept all penances. A defence lawyer was not allowed. If the accused did not confess, torture was used.

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Stubborn and recidivist 'heretics' were burned alive. They also did not hesitate to dig up the dead and burn the remains if they could 'prove' that the deceased had committed the crime of heresy after their death.

The burnings were scheduled for Sundays and holidays to attract as many spectators as possible. Special horsemen invited people from the surrounding area to come and watch. High prices were paid for windows overlooking the funeral pyre. While the Nazis gassed their victims before burning them, the inquisitors enjoyed the groans of the tortured.

Sexuality was demonised, women defamed. What is natural for any animal was degraded to devilry in humans. Any thought of physical pleasure had to be suppressed and fought. Perverse acts were the result. Woman, not equal to man even in the days of Yahweh, was perceived as inferior and increasingly exposed to the arbitrariness of man. Kahl: "*The New Testament is the product of neurotic philistines. Human sexuality is seen not as a source of pleasure but as a source of fear, not as a medium of love but as a medium of sin. Everything natural and physical is ostracised, sometimes openly, sometimes covertly*."

The many excommunications exchanged between popes, bishops and their followers also show how bad things were for the Church. The final break between the Latin and Greek Churches came in 1054. Both sides cursed and excommunicated each other. For many years there were two popes at the same time, one in Rome and the other in Avignon (France). The two representatives of Christ on earth condemned each other and their territories with terrible anathemas, instilling fear in the ignorant masses for the eternal salvation of their souls. The Synod of Pisa in 1409, which was supposed to end the schism, deposed both popes and elected a new one. Since the two predecessors did not think to clear the table, the children of God were suddenly blessed with three popes. Some Popes lasted only a few days or hours, and it even happened that one Pope was murdered by the next and dragged through the streets of Rome as a deterrent.

With irrefutable doctrines, so-called dogmas, the faithful were forced to accept every Vatican regulation in faith, that is, completely uncritically. While every scientifically minded person knows that every hypothesis remains a theory until it has found sufficient confirmation, popes and bishops believed that they could maintain their assertions for all eternity. Although it should have been clear long ago how much the popes and their followers had erred, infallibility was proclaimed at the 4th session of the First Vatican Council on 18 July 1870. Although many of the Council Fathers themselves expressed reservations and eventually left the Council before the decisive session, Pope Pius IX. succeeded in adopting the dogma of infallibility.

Anyone who dares to read the doctrinal decisions of the Church is openly threatened at every turn. Those who do not agree are rejected and cursed. "*Si quis autem huic Nostrae definitioni contradicere, quod Deus avertat, praesumpserit: anathema sit. But whoever, God forbid, dares to contradict this our definition (of papal infallibility), let him be anathema*." As relatively free people today, we can no longer imagine what anathema,

excommunication, exclusion from the community of believers, combined with terrible curses and threats, meant at that time.

There is no need to list all the wrong decisions that followed the decision of infallibility. It is clear to anyone who is not totally obedient to the Church that there can be no connection between a Holy Spirit and the Curia. The decisions of infallibility have always served the interests of the Church, never those of the faithful. When Hitler came to power, his first foreign treaty was with the Vatican. No Holy Spirit hovered over the Pope's head and advised him not to make a treaty with this man who was about to become one of the world's greatest criminals.

When someone is plagued by a crisis of conscience because the 'truths' of the Church cannot be reconciled with reason, what does his pastor tell him? “You must not doubt, my dear child!”

Yes, we are treated like children. We are baptised and incorporated into the Church before we even know where we are. From birth they try to cloud our minds with horror stories and fight our rational thinking with lies and false truths.

All great and great insights and movements have been fought against. *Giordano Bruno* died a fiery death on 2 February 1600. In 1633, *Galileo Galilei* was forced to swear an oath of perjury on his knees and in a hair shirt: "*I have before me the Holy Gospels, touch them with my hand and swear that I have always believed, believe now, and with God's help will continue to believe in the future, everything that the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church believes, preaches and teaches to be true... Therefore, with a sincere spirit and without hypocrisy, I renounce, abjure and anathematise these errors and heresies and, more generally, any error, heresy or sectarianism, whatever it may be, that is contrary to the Holy Church. I swear that in the future I will not proclaim anything, either in word or in writing, that could bring me under such suspicion. But if I know a heretic or someone suspected of heresy, I will report him to this Holy Office or to the inquisitor or ecclesiastical authority of my place of residence.”*

“*All parties knew that this oath was a single lie,*" writes *Johannes Hemleben* in a monograph on Galileo Galilei. "*But the moral corruption in which the so-called 'Holy Office' found itself at the beginning of the 17th century overcame all the scruples of conscience of both the plaintiff and the defendant. People had long become accustomed to such untruthful situations. As long as people allow the impulses of power to distort justice and the administration of justice, there will continue to be such trials that are intolerable to the human conscience. That is why today we cannot talk about a 'rehabilitation of Galileo', as the Viennese Cardinal König demanded in the summer of 1968. A sentence of shame that has been carried out cannot be annulled after centuries.*

The 'Galileo case' was not and is not primarily about the question of knowledge, about the position of the earth in space, but about the right claimed by the teaching authority of the Church to decide on truth and error with binding effect for all believers. Under the pretext of being the guardians of the one truth, crimes have been committed in the name of Christianity by the official leadership of the Church, leading to the extermination or elimination of persons whose orthodoxy was questioned.”

Instead of teaching the faithful to read and write, and educating them about their interests, it was preferable to keep them ignorant so that their money could be more easily

taken from their pockets. Priests were respected men who, if not owners, were at least stewards of estates large and small. Well into the 20th century, many a shy Christian would donate his worldly goods to the church to buy salvation in the hereafter. A great deal of money was made from all sorts of trinkets - pictures and relics. The selling of indulgences - give me money and I will forgive your sins - took on such forms that it eventually had to be banned.

Yahweh

While the so-called heathens – for example, the Romans – had a tolerant view of the concept of God and the Roman Empire developed a relatively fair legal system, Yahweh shows no mercy to dissenters and spreads a sense of justice that makes you want to weep. His commandments require faith in him. He is the great and jealous God who appears as fire, tolerates nothing and no one beside him, and destroys anyone who dares not believe in him and serve him. Yahweh is a slave-owner who gives Moses precise instructions on how to manage slavery and even how to sell his daughter as a maid. Hypocritically, he commands: "Thou shalt not kill" (Fifth Commandment), and in the next breath he demands that all prophets who proclaim otherwise be killed, and that every thief be executed, no matter for what reason he stole. Children should die if they curse their father or mother, even if they are beaten or tortured.

Whole nations must be wiped out in the wrath of the Lord: "If you (Moses) listen carefully to what I say and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies, and I will surround those who surround you. My angel will go before you and drive out the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites. I will send my terror before you, and I will confound every nation before you. I will make all your enemies flee before you" (Exodus 23:20ff).

It is interesting to note which commandments Yahweh did not proclaim. Those who lie seem to go unpunished, as do those who are hypocritical. He does not disapprove of sleazy types, but anyone who doubts this strange Lord Yahweh must be eliminated immediately.

When men fight - this God deals with such things! - and injure a pregnant woman so that she miscarries, the offender must repent. But if any other harm is done, life shall be given for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, gash for gash.

The foolishness of his commandments and laws is shown by this passage in Exodus 21:28-29: If a bull gores a man or a woman to death, the bull must be stoned to death. But if the bull has been mistreated and its owner, though warned, has not restrained it, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the bull shall be stoned and its owner also. The idea that the ox might have kicked because it was being tormented does not occur to this God.

Even though Yahweh has just called for non-killing, he is constantly regulating the killing of humans and animals. “You shall not let a witch live. Anyone who has intercourse with an animal shall be put to death. Anyone who sacrifices to a deity other than Yahweh shall be subject to the curse of destruction”. (Exodus 22:17-20)

The things this God promises and does not keep, just so you can serve him devotedly

and worship him alone: "If you serve the Lord your God, he will bless your bread and your water. I will keep sickness from you. There will be no woman in your land who miscarries or remains childless. I will make you live the full number of your days. I will send my terror before you; I will confound every nation to which you come, and I will make all your enemies flee before you." (Exodus 23:25-27) Either Yahweh is so naive that he himself believes that he can keep his people free from disease and miscarriage and make them live the full number of their days, or he is just saying this to make people more compliant with his wishes and commands.

Yahweh is like a raven who must have everything that glitters. He tells Moses to levy a tax. “Tell the Israelites to collect a tax for me. You shall collect the tax from everyone whose mind moves him to do so. This is the tax you are to collect from them: gold, silver and bronze, blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, goat hair, rams' skins dyed red, hides of sea cows and acacia wood, oil for the light, balm for the anointing oil and frankincense, and onyx stones for the ephod and the breastpiece. Make a sanctuary for me, that I may dwell among them. You are to make the tabernacle and all its furnishings according to the design I will show you. Make a chest of acacia wood, two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold, inside and out, and make an edging of gold around it. Make four gold rings for it and attach them to its four feet, two rings on one side and two rings on the other. Make poles of acacia wood and cover them with gold. Make a lid of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. Make two cherubim of beaten gold and carve them on the two ends of the mercy seat." (Exodus 25:2-18).

And so it goes on. The cherubim are to spread their wings upwards to guard the mercy seat, the candlesticks are to be made of pure gold, and a tabernacle is to be built for the Lord. An altar was a must, and many utensils were to be provided so that sacrifices could be made frequently and conveniently. His servants, the priests, should also be beautiful. So this almighty god commanded that holy garments be made, with a breast piece, shoulder piece, linen robe, ephod, turban and sash, as are still used today for the edification of this God.

The sacrifice, which consisted mainly of the slaughter of animals, had to be carried out according to precise instructions. The best animals were slaughtered in front of the altar in the presence of the Lord. The priest had to take the **blood with his fingers and smear it on the altar and pour the rest in front of it** (!). All the fat had to be burned on the altar, and other parts had to be burned in front of the Lord's camp. It is hard to imagine how disgusting it must have smelled after the various raids of this god and the subsequent sacrifices: during one raid against the Medes - which we read about in the Old Testament! - twelve thousand well-equipped Hebrews killed all the men. They took the women and children as spoils, as well as all the cattle and equipment. The towns, villages and castles were destroyed by fire. They came to Moses with the spoils, but he was angry with the leaders, robbers and murderers. He said to them: “*Why did you let all the women and children live? Kill every male, including the children, and kill the women if they have recognised men in the act of intercourse. But as for the virgins, leave them alive for yourselves. Then cleanse yourselves with the water of purification.*”

Imagine, these bands of robbers killing all the men and destroying everything in their path. But Moses, the great prophet of God, is horrified and demands that even the boys and all the women who have had sexual intercourse be killed. Only virgins are welcome, firstly because they are pretty to look at and pleasant to abuse, and secondly

because they can be used to increase the population. How the poor women felt and what happened to their children is not mentioned in the most sacred of books.

After the boys had been killed and the women strangled, god spoke. He did not demand that the killing stop and the frightened and abused girls be left in peace, no, he demanded his share of the spoils. He commanded Moses to separate all five hundred souls from man and beast. This amounted to 675 sheep and goats, 72 cattle, 61 donkeys and 32 virgins (!). Moses had to hand them over to the priest Eleazar to be sacrificed on the altar of the Lord, who then feasted on the blood of the slaughtered.

What man can call such a thing good, what man can find such a morbid thing other than abominable and perverse? How uneducated, how narrow-minded, how misguided must people be who have read and studied these things and yet pray piously before the altar of such an abomination?

The Old Testament is full of lies and monstrosities of all kinds. The tall tales begin with the account of creation and continue up to Moses, who was a strange leader of his people. There is constant fighting and quarrelling, killing and murdering, fornicating, sacrificing and re-sacrificing, swearing and not keeping, cursing and damning, deceiving and lying.

Yahweh is not a god, Yahweh is a demon, immensely vain and obsessed with the idea that all living things must serve and cheer him. Unable to do anything but make grand speeches, he uses tools, people, to achieve his ends.

Yahweh used his 'angels', whom he also called 'prophets', to speak to people. Stories like the burning bush are fairy tales. In reality, angels and prophets were mediums, and it was only through these mediums that Yahweh could communicate with Moses and other leaders and dictate his commandments and orders to them.

That mediumistic contact with the afterlife was well known is evident from the following passage (Leviticus 20:27): “If there is a man or woman among you who is a medium or a spiritist, they must be put to death. They shall be stoned, and their blood shall be on them.”

So if someone was a medium who was not in the service of Yahweh, they had to be eliminated immediately, lest the true demonic nature of Yahweh come to light through such mediums. Numbers 12 describes how even Moses' intermediaries, Miriam and Aaron, rebelled and said, "Has the Lord spoken only to Moses? Has he not also spoken to us?” At this the Lord became very angry and made Miriam turn white as snow and suffer from leprosy. Aaron was afraid and said nothing more. A little later, however, the Lord called Aaron into his kingdom and made Aaron's son Eleazar a prophet.

Deuteronomy 18:10-15 also talks about sorcerers and prophets: “There shall be no one among you who practises divination or sorcery, who interprets omens, who practises mediumship, who casts spells, who is a spiritist or a necromancer. **For anyone who does these things is an abomination to the Lord.** Because of these abominations, the Lord your God is driving them out from before you. **You must be completely devoted to the Lord your God**. For these nations, whose possession you are taking over, listen to soothsayers and oracle readers. But the Lord your God has decided otherwise for you. The Lord your God will raise up a prophet from among your brethren.

You shall listen to him."

Isn't it crystal clear why this Lord is so afraid of people who can see the future or are predisposed to do so?

Why is Yahweh considered a god, but Hitler a mass murderer? Didn't they both command the same thing? Hitler disliked ethnic groups like Jews and Gypsies, but Yahweh disliked whole nations!

For a long time the Church knew how to keep the faithful away from the foundations of their faith and to feed them with what they themselves considered good and pleasant. The Mass was read in Latin, and the pulpit was used to preach in the interests of the Church. It was Martin Luther who first translated the Bible into German and ensured that the minority who could read and write could also know it.

The church has always benefited from the fact that the alternatives - splinter groups, sects etc. - basically offered the same old thing, or at least the same God. It has been able to maintain its position because 'blasphemy', as I commit it here, is still punishable. But it also benefited from the fact that the educated were fed up and dismissed the subject of God with three simple words: 'He does not exist'.

But the end of the reign of Yahweh and his servants is only a matter of time. 'Modern' man is already insightful and adaptable; he will throw off the heavy burden of the past with relief and joy as soon as he finds a suitable opportunity. One day, perhaps not too far in the future, churches will fall into disrepair for lack of funds, and many of them will have to be preserved with public funds, so that the memory of terrible times will not be erased.

Mediumship

There is a wealth of literature on the subject of spiritual communication with beings in the afterlife, known as *Spiritism*. Spiritism is understood as the study of the afterlife, the main purpose of which is to prove that life continues after death. *Spiritualism* is based on these findings and shapes the results of Spiritism into worldviews.

While the belief in the existence and manifestation of spirits is very old and can be found in all religions, cultures and epochs of humanity, Spiritism only emerged in the 19th century. The birth date of Spiritism is considered to be 1 April 1848 (source: 'Handbook of Religious Societies'). Two little girls, Leah (10) and Kate (12), heard knocking in the house of their father, the Methodist farmer *John Fox*, in Hydesvill, near Rochester (USA). In a playful way, they managed to make contact with the 'knocking spirit'. A committee of enquiry made up of Rochester's 'most educated inhabitants', including Lederstrumpf author *Fenimore Cooper*, was unable to explain the knocking sounds in any natural way. When *Isaac Port* invented an ABC of knocking, it was possible to talk to the spirit. He said that he had lived in the Fox house as a merchant and had been murdered and buried in the cellar. They dug around and found a skeleton.

The events spread far and wide, triggering other phenomena. Houses began to be haunted, tables moved, voices were heard directly and automatically written. The medium *Andrew Jackson Davis* (1826-1910) wrote a book called 'The Philosophy of Spiritual Intercourse' in which he described the possibilities of spiritual intercourse with the afterlife. By 1855, the number of spiritists in America was estimated at 2 million. By 1848 the movement had spread to France, and in the following years to Germany and England. Highly respected personalities became believers, and atheists were convinced.

Over the following decades, Spiritism spread throughout the world. Its adherents included not only ordinary people, but also recognised scientists such as *Hans Driesch*, Häckel's student and philosopher; *Gustav Theodor Fechner*, philosopher; *Friedrich Zöllner*, astrophysicist; *Charles Richet*, physiologist and Nobel Prize winner; *Alf Russel Wallace*, co-founder of the theory of evolution with Darwin; *Marie and Pierre Curie*, physicists and Nobel Prize winners; *William James*, leading American psychologist; *Oliver Lodge* and *William Crookes*, highly respected English physicists. Even today, Spiritism has a considerable number of academic adherents.

Spiritism has led to the formation of countless circles, research groups, communities and national associations, and even a number of churches.

As a study of the afterlife, Spiritism describes the spiritual world as subtle, which, according to the findings of Spiritists, surrounds and permeates the material world. According to this, its radiating substance has different frequencies, which also determine the quality of the subtle world. The spiritual world is said to consist of a number of planes or dimensions. The lower the frequency of radiation of such a plane of existence, the closer it is - not spatially, but qualitatively - to the material world.

“Since it has been experienced that in séances (meetings) 'low level spiritual beings' prefer to speak and fob off the meeting participants with banalities and jokes' (source: 'Handbook of Religious Communities'), 'Spiritists attach importance to contacting 'spiritual beings' from higher and higher spheres. The information they provide extends to

all heights and widths of the universe, revealing the inner laws that govern it, describing the individual spheres and answering questions about the nature of God and the reason and purpose of His creative activity. The higher the spiritual being, the more weight is given to its information. This is why the so-called 'father mediums' are so highly regarded - mediums through whom angels or other members of the celestial hierarchies or 'Christ' or even 'God the Father' himself speak. Their 'revelations' are, of course, full of platitudes and pious, empty phrases, which is why critical spiritualists are extremely sceptical of messages that boast of this origin."

According to the 'Handbook of Religious Communities', the Spiritists worldview has the following basic tenets:

a) The 'gross material' world, i.e. the material world, is only a relatively small part of total reality. It is embedded in the 'subtle' world, which is just as real as the material world, but cannot be perceived by the physical senses and is therefore beyond the reach of scientific research. The 'fine matter' was called 'Od', which, according to its discoverer, *Karl Freiherr von Reichenbach* (1788-1869), is a hidden world force comparable to magnetism. Today's spiritualists use the terms and findings of atomic physics to describe the subtle matter as a substance made up of rays. The whole universe is made of it. Coarse matter' is merely compressed radiation, and in its smallest atomic components there is a constant change between the corpuscle and the wave state. The ethereal world - also called the astral or etheric world - surrounds and permeates the material world.

b) The human being consists of three parts: the physical body, the astral body and the spirit. The astral body is a true counterpart of the physical body and therefore has the same limbs, sentience and sense organs. However, because it is made of a more subtle substance, it is not subject to the same fate as the physical body in terms of sickness, ageing and death. It is the actual dwelling place of the spirit. It is made of an indestructible substance and therefore has a life without end.

c) Life on earth is a station on the spirit's path to perfection. It is a school, and the spirit incarnates to learn, to pass tests, and thus to become ripe for further ascent. The incarnated spirit has the task of freeing itself from the bonds that bind it to the material and hinder its progress. These include: selfishness, instinctive sensuality, envy, pride, jealousy, arrogance, hypocritical piety and fanatical belief in dogmas. The most important requirement to be fulfilled is charity. Its practice is 'the only true religion'. For selfless love is the fundamental law of the universe. The value of religions and denominations is not measured by their doctrines, but by the measure of love they awaken and practice.

d) Death is neither the end nor the destruction, but only the transition from the earthly stage to another stage of existence, a change of scenery. Clad in the astral body, the spiritual being enters the world beyond. For this transition to be smooth, it is important that the spiritual being believes in the afterlife during its earthly existence. For if a person dies in the delusion that death is the end of all things, he will be confused after his physical death and will not believe that he has died, since he is still alive; he will therefore try to continue his earthly activities and habits, and in doing so he will realise that something is no longer right, and he will end up wandering around at a loss.

e) The astral world is like the earth in terms of landscape, so it has mountains, valleys, water, animals, trees, flowers, cities, etc. Terrible images are described from the lower spheres. Good spirits take care of the tormented as soon as they are called. They help

them to see reason and, if they repent, lead them to purer worlds. But the higher spheres are already filled with peace and beauty and offer many more comforts than the earthly world. The isolated spiritual being enters an environment appropriate to it, and its desires for home, garden, lifestyle, etc. are immediately realised. There is a vibrant spiritual, cultural and social life.

f) The spiritual being's path and mission in the hereafter is a direct continuation of its earthly path. It is placed on the plane of existence that corresponds to the level of development it has reached on earth. This can also be explained physically: spiritual progress or regression during earthly life also affects the astral body, giving it a higher or lower frequency, and after physical death the spirit enters the sphere that has the same frequency - this is a kind of automatic judgement, the spiritualist counterpart to the biblical Last Judgement. The whole journey of the spirits is characterised by a pedagogical evolutionism, which has the following features:

The spiritual being is free in its choices and its destiny is in its own hands.

It is by nature destined for spiritualisation and achieves this through increasing knowledge and moral refinement.

Stagnation or regression on this path of self-perfection automatically leads to descent to a lower plane of existence, and ascent only occurs when the yearning for spiritualisation is reawakened. Each higher sphere surpasses the lower in scenic splendour, in the wealth of opportunities for education and broadening of horizons, and in the spiritual-ethical qualities of its inhabitants.

Parallel to the ascent, knowledge, purity, joy and bliss increase. The path of ascension thus opens up limitless possibilities for spiritual beings to realise and develop themselves in the boundless abundance and glory of the divine universe. This self-realisation is the work of the spirit itself, and pedagogical evolutionism ensures that all spiritual beings will eventually achieve this goal.

The books of the former priest *Johannes Greber* (1876-1944) have become very important for Christian Spiritualism. Someone also gave me his book 'Communication with the Spirit World, Its Laws and Its Purpose' and I read with fascination how the priest came to know mediumship and the unusual events that occurred during mediumship. The books of the Frenchman *L. H. D. Rivail*, alias *Allen Kardec* (1804-1869), also helped to spread Spiritism. I subscribed to 'Messages from the Beyond' from the *Spiritual Lodge in Zuric*h, received the book 'Personal Survival of Death' by *E. Matthiesen* and the volume 'This Side and the Other Side of the Wall' by *Friedrich Härdle*. In Vienna I visited a circle that practised communication with the other side. I quickly lost any chance of checking whether the dead were really speaking to the assembled group by asking too direct questions too soon. But even in retrospect, I doubt that I would ever have had the opportunity for a scientific investigation. The leader took the process for granted and did not feel the need to verify it. He wanted his work to help people understand that there is life after death, something he himself had long been convinced of. He certainly meant well and tried to help in his own way.

In Vienna, *Raimund Kubasek* founded the 'Cosmological Club', experimented eagerly and tried to shed light on the darkness of the secret sciences. He was an extremely

critical person and wrote a series of works characterised by nobility of mind, love of truth and charity. In the last words of his work 'A Ray of Light into the Darkness of the Secret Sciences' he says: 'To be a sincere counsellor and guide to one's neighbour in truth and kindness is the noblest work of man. It seems to me that he felt and thought as he wrote.

In my opinion, Spiritism has been repeatedly questioned and rejected not without good reason. You don't need spirits from beyond the grave to move tables, make strange noises, knocks and light effects in darkened rooms lit by candles; a few banal tricks are enough to astonish people who expect a few tricks from alleged spirits for a change. There is no need to think seriously about it.

Spiritists, who see communication with the spirit world not as a form of entertainment but as a path to greater knowledge of life, naturally reject these mundane activities, any form of obscuration and any secrecy. These spiritists are honestly and sincerely trying to find out the truth about the meaning of life and the possibilities of life after death.

But can't even the most truth-seeking spiritists be wrong? Isn't it possible that even the most honest seeker of truth can fall into the trap of spiritual deception?

Looking back, I can say that in the many years that I have been involved with spiritualism and the like, I have repeatedly succumbed to deception, although I have tried to discern the truth and nothing but the truth. There are hidden desires and hopes within us that create expectations in one direction and disappointments in the other. It is only slowly and gradually that our personality matures, that our desires and hopes fade, that our vision is widened and our eyes are sharpened.

Spiritual communication with the beyond has always existed. Even Yahweh speaks of fortune-telling spirits who must be killed immediately because they do not confirm the religious lies of the desert god, but warn people of his mischief. Among the peoples who believed in good and evil gods, it was common practice to consult the gods. Many people turned to soothsayers for advice before making important decisions.

The problem is that very few people are interested in the truth, and those who seek it face almost insurmountable problems. If you want to know more about this, read the works of Johannes Greber and Raimund Kubasek, two people who were truthful and sought the truth wholeheartedly. Pastor Johannes Greber came into contact with beings who knew that many of the teachings of the Catholic Church were false. They tried to enlighten him about what seemed wrong to them. Raimund Kubasek seems to have been the first seeker of truth to realise that true knowledge can only be found through insight and not through faith.

I once read a comment in a psychic report that made me think. I do not remember the title of the work or the exact wording, but it was about the fact that there are worlds beyond where the inhabitants do not believe in God. Raimund Kubasek had apparently been in contact with beings who had realised that faith was false and believed that Christ was the true god. Through his writing medium he received a report on the life of Christ, which he published under the title 'Life Recognition II'. This report was later published with some changes by Franz Woller under the title 'Factual Report from the Eternal World for all Peoples of the Earth'.

The editor of the work 'Life Cognition II' by Raimund Kubasek describes the efforts that Raimund Kubasek undertook on his way to Life Cognition. I would like to reproduce this preface in part because it shows how almost impossible it is to penetrate to the truth. Even if you reach true beings, it does not mean that they are free from error. Just as you can believe what you want, so you can 'know' what you want. Humans, like beings in the afterlife, can err, put forward all sorts of theories and be convinced that they have realised the 'truth'. This is what happens when one is not thoroughly honest, when one accepts excuses and turns a blind eye here and there.

Now you may think that there is confusion everywhere, here in this world and 'over there' in the hereafter. We feel this way because we live in earthly reality and do not see too far. However, this earth and the spheres near the earth are only a very small part of the whole of creation. If we were elsewhere, we would be more than surprised at earthly thinking.

Our mistake is to expect some kind of central office where the truth is stored in a colossal archive and can be retrieved. Such an archive, where information about world systems and galaxies is stored and supervised and administered by God, does not exist and is superfluous in terms of truth. Therefore, there is no retrievable information about the life of Christ. If someone asks about it - like Raimund Kubasek, for example - then the beings in the hereafter try to answer the questions as correctly as possible. They ask different beings who they think should know, and they may ask others, and so on, and the result looks as it should.

Two thousand years have passed since the life of Christ. Much of it has been falsified, twisted and obscured. Countless people have taken this spiritual hodgepodge with them into the afterlife and spread it further. So it is understandable that soon no one on earth or in the hereafter will know what really happened. When asked, people try to tell people 'the truth'. They try hard, but the result is again only a belief, albeit now formulated in the spirit of knowledge.

Here is an extract:

"From about 1910 Mr. Raimund Kubasek also began to investigate occult powers. Initially, as a layman and a great sceptic, he visited numerous spiritualist circles as a guest. He then examined countless experiments with various mediums and was finally convinced of the existence of unknown forces. Gradually he became convinced that spiritual beings from the beyond could communicate through a medium. With the help of this communication, the scientist tried to penetrate deeper into the realm of spiritual knowledge. Rarely did he receive clear and logical answers to the questions he posed to the beings from beyond. Accustomed to rejecting phrases, theories, assumptions and suppositions, as well as dogmas and mere belief in a mysterious Supreme Being, he was not satisfied with the few useful answers he received. Determined to get to the bottom of the madness and ignorance of the otherworldly beings, he continued his intensive research in this direction. In this endeavour, the scholar soon encountered fanatical opposition and often malice from most of the circle members, who would not tolerate any criticism of the manifested spirit. It was noticeable that in all the circles the participants had no interest in profound questions, and were mainly drawn together out of curiosity and sensationalism. Furthermore, the manifesting beings from the beyond only said and answered what the circle leader and the séance participants expected. The researcher realised that the circle

leader was primarily responsible for the spiritual attunement of the medium and that, due to the unified thinking and feeling of those gathered, only beings from the hereafter of the same spiritual disposition and similar character could find an attunement. Furthermore, many beings who have been living in the afterlife for decades, often centuries, have the same ignorance in the spiritual-mental realm, the same credulity and also the same reprehensible character traits as they had as human beings.

In order to be able to continue his research unhindered and independently, Mr Raimund Kubasek trained one of his office colleagues, who showed great interest in this endeavour and also had good mediumistic abilities, to become a hearing, writing and speaking medium. Other mediums made themselves available for various experiments, and in the following years the researcher had the opportunity to delve deeper into this field of knowledge. He recognised the powers of suggestion, hypnosis and telepathy, the great responsibility of the experimenter and, not least, the dangers of spiritualistic communication for the layman and the easily influenced. He also emphasised that the decisive factor for the correct spiritual attunement of the medium is above all the leader and director of the medium. It is imperative that he fulfil the spiritual and character requirements and have the necessary experience in this field to be able to judge the transmitted spirit impartially and objectively.

Mr Kubasek took great pains to attune his colleague, who had hitherto been the most reliable of all mediums, so that gradually beings of higher thought and good character could also communicate through him. With their clear and logical answers, these beings filled many gaps in the researcher's knowledge. It was his aim to contact the former disciples of Christ through a suitable medium and to receive a factual report of the great event.

He did not want to keep this report and the results of his research to himself or to a small circle of people, but to offer it to all people without exception and let them benefit from it.

During this time, the researcher gave public lectures, wrote a book entitled 'A Ray of Light into the Darkness of the Secret Sciences', wrote relevant articles for newspapers, held discussions with well-known psychiatrists and influential church personalities, and began to work on individual topics for his philosophical-scientific work: 'Life Cognition Volume I'. In 1923 he founded a social organisation which was to become an educational institution for free knowledge of creation, God and the nature of life, based solely on insight. Anyone interested in cognitive knowledge could join the association. In regular lectures, followed by discussions, and with the help of practical examples, Mr Kubasek endeavoured to introduce his listeners to the spiritual and intellectual field of knowledge.

Over the years the number of members grew steadily. Some fanatical defenders of the faith also joined the association. They had come mainly out of curiosity and soon rejected the principle laid down by the founder: 'To be free and truthful in thought and helpful to one's neighbour'. This small group of people managed to influence and mentally attune the researcher's colleague and mediator to such an extent that only spiritual beings with the corresponding way of thinking could adapt to him. At first covertly, but then more and more overtly, the beings from beyond also took a stand against the researcher. He bore the worst threats, malice and slander with the greatest calmness and patience, still striving to restore harmony and not to lose the medium. But all the scholar's efforts were in vain. The mediator was no longer in the right spiritual frame of mind, and so further positive

cooperation was impossible.

Mr Kubasek was not discouraged by the difficulties, disappointments and hostilities. Undeterred, he continued to search, research and teach, and also to work on his first volume, 'Life Knowledge'.

One day in 1931, a member of the Association and personal friend of Kubasek's turned up at his home and asked Mr Kubasek to test his psychic abilities. He explained that he wanted to offer himself as a medium for Kubasek's further research. The test did indeed reveal psychic abilities. However, the scientist took some time to consider the matter, because training and proper spiritual attunement require a lot of time and effort, and the basic psychological character of the medium is important, and certain conditions must be met by all parties involved. It was only after careful consideration and further extensive discussion with his friend, a quiet, modest man, and his friend's wife, that the scientist decided to take on the training.

In order to be able to devote himself fully to his new task, Mr Kubasek took early retirement. It took him just over a year to complete the training and find the right spiritual attunement. Then the researcher had achieved his goal. He had succeeded in establishing direct spiritual contact with the former disciples of Christ through the new medium. They were able to express themselves without restriction because the will of the medium was completely eliminated and his soul and body showed the necessary attunement and condition.

The training had taken place quietly, and in the same way the present report was produced within three years by means of mediumistic communication. The researcher worked mainly with the former disciple John the Younger. With him he discussed all the details and events of the period in question, repeatedly asking questions in order to get a clear picture of all the events of the time of Christ. As far as possible, the scholar tried to speak personally to the former participants through the medium. Then, in consultation with John, he selected the events that were relevant to the work. Usually late at night, when the medium was undisturbed, he would go into a trance and, using the other body, John would write down the events and incidents already discussed and selected. The next day, these writings were given to Mr Kubasek, who edited them and then used them as the basis for the factual report. While working on this report, the mediator followed the instructions of the researcher to the letter. He showed no interest or curiosity in what he said or wrote".

The available information suggests that there may be, and has been, a spiritual connection with the beyond, although probably only with the 'world spheres' close to the earthly world. In any case, as an open-minded researcher in the spiritual field for many years, I have never succeeded in obtaining any usable information through a medium. For example, a medium who had read my article on the Internet wrote to me that he could contact Jesus and even God. After I asked him a simple scientific question, he broke off contact with me.

I have the impression that it will not be possible in the near future to contact worlds where beings live in the spirit of truth and charity, where harmony reigns and lies, hypocrisy and malice are unknown. Over the centuries and millennia, human beings on Earth have created so many misleading and even malevolent forces with their thoughts,

thereby separating the Earth from worlds and world systems of peaceful and harmonious attunement, that it will probably take some time to achieve a breakthrough with true and loving thoughts.

The factual report has driven me to near despair on several occasions. On the one hand, it conveys sublime thoughts that could be one hundred per cent correct. On the other hand, you can see how certain texts have been changed after they were found to be inaccurate. I understand that there have been difficulties in transmission, and I also understand that people want to add their own meaning. But that understanding has to end somewhere. If it becomes clear that those who claim to teach the truth do not always take it seriously, or do not really understand the concept of truth (truthfulness), then this must not be tolerated under any circumstances. Any teaching, no matter how lofty and beautiful it may sound, must be tested in daily life! For example, if beings from the other side claim that they are always happy to help with the realisation of truth, then they should prove it. If they say that they can testify to this or that, then it is not enough to write it down through a medium (unfortunately you can write whatever you want!), but they must use methods that are comprehensible. For example, if the disciples of Christ knew that Christ's teachings would be falsified, then they should have written down Christ's teachings and kept them somewhere where they could be found two thousand years later. If the writings found two thousand years later, in a cave or elsewhere, agree with earlier medial transmissions, then that is evidence that has scientific significance.

Reality may be simpler than we think. In the abundance of information, we miss the basic facts. We live in one of the many, many worlds that exist in our universe, a world of contrasts, a world where terrible laws of nature prevail. We cannot know why we are here, no matter how hard we try. In this world of ours, we can learn a great deal if we want to, and we can learn to distinguish between what is true and good, and what is untrue and evil. But life is a comparatively short time and then we go to a sphere in the hereafter and then again to a planet in our universe. Perhaps we live only for a limited time in this world that we come to later - it is pointless to dwell too much on such speculations. Let us try to learn in this world instead of escaping into fantasy worlds, let us try to grow spiritually and emotionally and develop compassion and love for other living beings. What is the use of beautiful-sounding information from a supposed afterlife that ultimately serves more to distract and mislead than to find the truth?

Malcolm S. Southwood reports

There were many more reports and pieces of literature that directly or indirectly provided 'proof' that we are spirit and can live on. I heard about spiritual healers, saw in a film how people were operated on with just their hands, how blood flowed and people were released from their suffering. There was a report on television about a shaman who had his tongue cut out on camera. Afterwards, he was able to summon up so much spiritual strength that he was able to reattach the cut piece to the original part without leaving a scar. I found a book by the English doctor *Laurence J. Bendit* and his clairvoyant wife *Phoebe D. Bendit*, who was a nurse. They described the spiritual processes from birth to death.

I could still observe forces within me that must have been of a spiritual nature. It was only gradually that I lost them, the more I became absorbed in my work. Certain dreams also made me very pensive again and again. I was so absorbed in the search for truth that I kept having questions and a certain restlessness within me. It happened that I dreamt the solution and woke up at a very specific time, almost to the minute! What was even more amazing was that sometimes I woke up at the right minute because of another sound - for example, a child calling! One day - I must have been about 35 years old - I dreamt again, but lo and behold, I dreamt that I would no longer dream (would no longer have such instructive dreams). From that day on I was on my own and had to go my way without any visible support.

Years later, I came across a book by the professional English healer and therapist *Malcolm S. Southwood*, who had been accompanied by an inner voice for a long time, until one memorable evening it told him: "It's time you took responsibility for these things yourself. From now on you're on your own. Learn to understand what you are doing and how to use your own spiritual power and love."

In his book The Healing Experience, Southwood describes his journey to becoming a professional healer. The German edition is called 'Beruf: Heiler' and was published by Knaur-Verlag. Southwood reports:

I have been working as a professional healer and therapist for over ten years now, helping people from all over the world. The material in this book comes from my experience with thousands of patients. I have always been open to new ideas and have tried to break with dogma and dispel the dark clouds of superstition that cast their shadows over the world of healing.

I am what is commonly known as a spiritual healer. This is an indescribably poor term because it is open to so many different and often erroneous interpretations. I will only report on my personal experiences and beliefs and will not speak for other healers. Healing is an individual art, which is why healers, like artists, have their own distinctive style. There are no two painters who paint alike, nor should they criticise those who use a brush differently. Rather, each should consider how they can benefit from the other's technique.

How did I become a healer? How does a businessman get involved in something like this? At the time I had my own international marketing company for agricultural products. At the same time, I was under contract with one of the major US oil companies, where I was responsible for marketing agricultural products. This job involved travelling all over

the world.

One day, I had just returned from a business trip to London and was on my way home in the evening when I got stuck in a traffic jam. I happened to see a sign in a window that said 'Spiritualist Church'. At first I didn't think much of it, but as the week went on I couldn't get the words 'Spiritualist Church' out of my head. I started asking around and pestering anyone who might know what a 'Spiritualist' was. I must have got on people's nerves, because my wife finally suggested that I attend a service. “It won't be quiet until you see for yourself what it's all about,” she said. So I went to one of their services the following weekend.

I have to admit that at first I thought everyone there was crazy, especially when, during the ceremony, the pastor pointed at me and said: “You will be a healer in the name of God, because you have a great white aura around you. The work you are meant to do is starting right now!” Believe me, I couldn't get out of that church fast enough. I was supposed to be a healer! What an absurd idea! I had a wife and four children to look after, a business to run. I must have been out of my mind to step over that threshold! Yet, for some inexplicable reason, the Church kept drawing me back. And each time I went, I received the same message, until finally people began to come up to me and ask me to heal them of their headaches, knee pains and other ailments. What was even more surprising was that I was actually able to help, and so more and more people turned to me for help.

After a while, the same inner voice that had urged me to attend church services told me to stop. The church had served its purpose and set me on my way, and from now on I would stand on my own two feet. It may sound strange to talk about an inner voice giving me instructions, but it was not the first time I had come into contact with it. Even as a child I had heard this voice guiding and directing me, and I had never had reason to believe that it was anything extraordinary. I simply believed that everyone has such a protective and guiding voice within them. Yes, there have been times in my life when this voice has spoken through me and I have heard the thoughts of another person on my lips. More than once it has saved me from a difficult situation. When I couldn't think of an answer myself, I just had to let this 'inner voice' speak through me.

Shortly afterwards, in 1979, I fell seriously ill and was taken to the local hospital. I have little memory of my time there. All I know is that I left my body. What I do remember is extremely vague, but I remember that I went somewhere to learn. I was undergoing some kind of intensive training. The doctors were convinced that I was hallucinating, but I was not. The whole thing lasted no longer than about five days. During that time I was in isolation, had two lumbar punctures and a whole series of tests. In the end, no one could really say why I had suddenly collapsed in unspeakable pain and fallen into a kind of coma. But one thing was clear: the man who went into hospital was not the man who came out. It took me a whole year to fully recover, and during that time I visibly lost interest in my work. My whole outlook on life and death and all my emotional values had changed. And something else had changed: my gift for healing. In a sense, I grew wings in this regard, and more and more people came to me for help with all sorts of ailments.

After a while I closed down what was left of my business and began to focus entirely on healing. I felt I was reacting like most people do when they suddenly realise they have something truly valuable to offer. I wanted the whole world to know about it. My enthusiasm was almost unstoppable. First of all, I said to myself, I had to get the public's attention by advertising. At that moment, that little inner voice spoke up. “Don't

advertise!" it said. What nonsense, I thought. Why have such a talent if you don't make the most of it? And so, for the first time, I ignored my inner voice and set about organising an advertising campaign.

After the day when the voice said, “Don't advertise” and I replied quietly but firmly, “Leave me alone!” I received a second warning. I had made an appointment to see a patient that morning. At the appointed time, there was indeed a knock at the door, but instead of the expected patient, a priest stood before me. I didn't know him and must have looked rather surprised, because he immediately began to apologise for his appearance and explained to me in a somewhat hesitant tone that he didn't really know why he had come either. He had been driving down the road on his way to a meeting when he suddenly felt an irresistible urge to turn into our driveway and drive up the path to our house.

“I don't know why I'm here,” he shrugged. “May I come in anyway?”

He entered the room where I treated my patients, and I told him I didn't have much time for him because I was expecting someone. But he didn't listen to me.

“What a wonderful view,” he said, looking out the bay window at the swimming pool. “What do you do? What is your profession?”

And so I told him about my gift of healing and gave him some of my devotional writings. After we had spent about half an hour together without exchanging another word, he said quietly, “This is a wonderful place and you are not alone here. I don't know why I feel compelled to tell you this, and I don't understand it myself, but under no circumstances should you advertise your gift.”

With these words he got up and left my house. I never saw him again. Nor did I see the patients who had appointments with me that morning. I don't know what happened to them. I was in a very difficult situation. I had given up my business and my source of income. And I couldn't advertise to make a new living. But all was not lost. It was certainly not advertising when the local doctor, with whom I was good friends, sent me the patients whom the state health service could not help. So I went to him and told him about my work. He said he had heard about it and that I had already helped some of his patients. He promised to refer those who might be interested to me. I didn't see this referral as advertising, but the voice inside me disagreed. I was unable to help any of the ten or twelve patients the doctor sent my way. I had to conclude that I had completely lost my ability to heal. I could not help anyone. So I had ruined everything. I had thrown away the chance of a lifetime and my incredible gift, all because I thought I knew better. Now I had no choice but to revive my business.

After about six months, when I had long given up any thought of working as a healer, a woman called and asked for my help. She had arthritis and was in great pain. I explained that I no longer worked as a healer. She was so disappointed and begged me to try one more time - how could I refuse? So I told her to come to me and held my hands over her - and lo and behold, it worked. I felt the power flow through me again and heard a little voice inside saying, “In the future, do as you are told!”

For a long time that voice accompanied me on my path. But one memorable evening, as I was discussing spiritual matters with some friends, it said to me: “It is time for you to take responsibility for these things yourself. From now on you're on your own.

Learn to understand what you're doing and how to use your own spiritual power and love." From that moment on I realised that healing is much more than holding your hands over a patient and leaving someone else in charge.

Southwood continues: "Healers are not special. They have not been chosen by God or anyone else because of some supernatural quality or belief... Healers are usually ordinary people with a sincere desire to help others. Healing is a gift, but it is not given because of a particular philosophical belief or for services rendered. Healing is an innate ability that many people have, some more than others. As with painting (which most of us can do to a greater or lesser extent), some are better, some are less good, and some have very special abilities in a particular area of healing; and with increasing practice the quality of work improves many times over for all.

Some healers prefer to work in a group, others alone. Some close their eyes and meditate while healing, others need background music. There are healers who work in organisations such as church institutions, while others work completely independently. There are also a number of groups that specialise in particular conditions. Some believe that you can only heal after you have completed the appropriate training and undergone some sort of initiation or ceremony in front of your peers to prove yourself worthy of their acceptance and support. Others believe that one must be a follower of a particular faith, have acquired sufficient understanding and knowledge of a particular religion or moral philosophy to be acceptable to God, much like themselves. Ultimately, however, it does not matter in the least what you believe or who you choose as your teacher. Either you have that certain something that makes you a healer, or you do not.

So what does a spiritual healer do? Very little, actually, that you can see or judge. They stand behind or in front of their patient, alone or with a colleague, and transfer spiritual or physical energy from themselves or through themselves to a person who has requested treatment. As these energies flow into the patient, the normal state of health is partially or completely restored. I say partially because it often takes more than one session to heal completely.

So what do I do when someone comes to me for healing? A person is made up of body, mind and spirit. How I approach a patient depends on whether they have a physical, emotional or spiritual problem. When it comes to physical ailments, very little can go wrong. The body is an ingenious 'machine'. It controls and maintains itself completely independently, requiring only fuel in the form of energy, which we get from food. Except in the case of genetic defects, accidents, poisoning or disease, our 'machine' is absolutely reliable. There is a fifth area: trauma.

I believe that most disorders, apart from the four exceptions mentioned above, have their origin in the soul. Healing therefore means helping the soul to come to terms with a difficult situation so that it can work in harmony with the body. If the interaction between body and soul is disturbed, the soul will collapse over time.

By the time a patient comes to me, they have usually tried all the orthodox methods and have been told that they just have to learn to live with their problem. If a patient comes to me without having consulted a doctor, when he obviously needs conventional medical treatment, it is a matter of course for me to accept him only if he is willing to seek orthodox medical advice first".

Malcolm S. Southwood then goes on to describe his methods of healing and his contribution to healing, concluding:

"As long as a healer believes that healing is a gift and as such requires no further development or care, he will inevitably remain in the role of amateur operating on the fringes of our health system. Of course, the ability to heal is a gift, but this is no reason to assume that one can dispense with demonstrating minimum standards of professionalism before declaring oneself competent in the art of healing.

Healers also need training and education to fully develop, use and understand their gift. Basic knowledge of counselling methodology, psychotherapy, physiology, biology, religion, metaphysics and other subjects directly or indirectly related to their work is essential if healers are to advance their professional status.

Once healers begin to take themselves seriously, doctors will follow. Healing therapy is urgently needed to address the root causes of the many health problems in our society, because drug treatment alone is not enough. I am convinced that the medical profession has lost its way in the jungle of technology. It has limited itself to treating symptoms that the subconscious mind continues to produce regardless of medical intervention, until someone finally looks beyond the symptoms and identifies the causes. That is true healing."

The Bridge of Consciousness

Around 1971 I acquired a study of the vital-etheric field of the human being entitled 'The Bridge of Consciousness', published by Adyar-Verlag Graz. The English nurse *Phoebe Bendit-Payne*, who had a certain psychic perception (clairvoyance), and her husband, the doctor *Laurence J. Bendit*, were the authors of this study, which describes the processes in the 'vital-etheric aura' of a person during pregnancy, childhood and adolescence, in health and illness and at the time of death.

This study fascinated me because it was not based on faith but on scientific methods of observation. It also described the force fields that I had been feeling and observing since the three-day fast. The sum of all the force fields is called the aura, which had previously been described by *W.J. Kilner*, the consultant physician at St. Thomas's Hospital in London, who was able to make it visible to the naked eye by using certain chemical filters.

In a preface, Phoebe Bendit-Payne explains what clairvoyance means to her personally: "In the physical world, much can be learned by observation, but it does not follow that one understands what one has observed. Even when using the ability of clairvoyance, one is still using an external method of observation, and one sees many things that one does not always decipher correctly. All such visions are personal and should not be confused with spiritual enlightenment. The testimony of the physical senses must never be accepted as proof of ultimate reality. Any extrasensory perception must pass through the mind of the perceiver and is therefore influenced by his thoughts, intellectual interests and the general tone and colour of his thinking".

The authors describe an aura that surrounds every living being and is hidden from ordinary sight. It changes according to health and illness. The skin is only the outermost spatial boundary of the dense physical body. Outside it, however, there is an aura which, although subtle and beyond the range of normal vision or even the most sensitive photographic film, is nevertheless intimately connected with the body and its functions. It disappears only after death. "It might be objected," the authors write, "that it is a simple earthly thing, like the heat radiated by a living body, which disappears when the cold of death sets in. It may indeed be true that some of it has to do with heat. But that would leave unanswered the question of why a piece of hot metal does not have the same aura as a living body. Nor would it explain why the contours of this aura change when there is no measurable change in local or general body temperature.

In the light of modern research, it could also be assumed that what is being visualised here is simply an electromagnetic field, as produced by any physiological process, even if it is only a minimal potential of a few microvolts. This is certainly closer to reality, since these potential differences are directly related to mental and physical processes, i.e. vital processes.

Finally, in recent decades, many people have been able to diagnose the cause of illness, as well as the general state of health and vitality of patients, by using various devices, ranging from very expensive, supposedly electrical devices, to simple divining rods and pendulums, or even just their bare hands. It is logical to assume that they too were dealing with the radiation field that exists around and within the body...

When all these facts are taken together, they only confirm what clairvoyance has to

say on the matter. And although there are probably no two clairvoyants who agree on every detail, there is a great deal of agreement, firstly, that an aura does exist and, secondly, that it is a projected image of the physical, vital and psychological, spiritual state of the person to whom it belongs.

If one takes a clairvoyant look at the aura surrounding living beings, it is far greater than the limited 'atmosphere' described by Kilner. It seems that his method could only visualise the inner layers, the part that roughly follows the contours of the body. However, more sophisticated methods of observation show that the entire force field is much larger and has an approximately egg-shaped shape. In a normal, alert and active person, it has a diameter of almost two metres at its widest point, and in a perpendicular direction it usually extends more than half a metre above the head and below the feet. But these dimensions are very variable, far more variable than those of the denser inner aura which surrounds the body.

The larger ovoid aura is a complex formation of lines of force which, on the one hand, reflect the momentary processes of thought and feeling at any given moment, and, on the other hand, indicate the developed as well as the undeveloped potentialities of the individual's spiritual and psychic nature. In short, it is a mirror that reflects the image of the whole person at every stage of his or her personal development.

A special feature of the aura, noticed by every true clairvoyant, is a series of rapidly moving energy vortices located at certain points on the body. These energy vortices were known in ancient times and can be found in both Eastern and Western cultures, depicted in drawings, statues and carvings. In any case, they appear again and again with striking consistency in the traditions of the ancients as well as in the perceptions of modern, sensitive people. Moreover, it is not even necessary to be able to 'see' them in order to recognise their presence; many people feel them with their hands when they examine a person using extrasensory touch... Their Sanskrit name, chakra, means 'wheel', which aptly describes them. They are the organs of the psychic part of every living being and are very complex in structure. They are also very closely connected to the control mechanism of the dense body through the nervous system and the endocrine glands.

Far Eastern and Ancient Seekers of truth

At all times there have been truth seekers, sincere, compassionate people interested in understanding the meaning of life and working constructively for the benefit of all living beings. These people can be found in all professions and among all peoples. Many truth seekers worked in small circles, so we know nothing about them today. Others carried their thoughts into the public sphere, and particularly talented ones managed to pass their thoughts on to posterity. I would like to tell about some of these people in my work, especially those whose lives have been an example to me.

It has been said to this day that the Church has given the world God knows what treasures. I would argue that the opposite is largely true, and that I do not need to prove it. The direction in which the Church has moved can easily be seen from the height of its power in the Middle Ages, when the faith took on forms that were no longer acceptable even to many of the clergy.

I think it is necessary to show *that long before Christ there were people who acted wisely and taught love for their fellow men*. The love of one's fellow man taught by Christ, but only partially practised by the Church, is also full of exaggerations. While an animal naturally defends itself when attacked, a human being should wait patiently for the next blow. These pious sayings about turning the other cheek when one is struck have more to do with stupidity than with humanity and charity. In truth, the faithful should always be open to new kicks, while those with big heads are allowed to strike before anyone has done anything to them. Or did the popes go out into the fields and on the crusades to turn their cheeks?

The Sermon on the Mount, which is often quoted and is said to be one of the most beautiful, is only meant to console the 'poor in spirit', those who cannot help themselves, in an otherworldly world: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'. Those who are sad will be comforted in the hereafter, the meek will receive a piece of land in the hereafter, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will find righteousness before God. “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in the heavens.” Such a philosophy only produces good citizens, sheep who will put up with everything in this world! It is highly doubtful that Christ said such nonsense.

It is high time that *religious education* to be taught in schools and not *propaganda for the Church*. It is high time that children were taught about people like Confucius, Laozi and Buddha, and shown what it means to seek and understand the meaning of life, to know the truth, to act wisely and to be tolerant.

In the following chapters I will try to give you a sense of what it means to seek the truth, to love wisdom and to prefer knowledge to belief. I will tell you of a conversation between Thales of Miletus, the tireless seeker, and of an illuminating discussion at the University of Alexandria between a sceptic, an Epicurean and a friend of the Stoic school. Finally, I will tell you about the truth-seekers Confucius, Laozi and Buddha.

As sources I have used various works, but in particular the thirty-six-volume historical work of *Otto Zierer*, who knew how to transform historical data into vivid images and to present them not only relatively historically accurate, but also in a lively and human way.

In this context, I would like to point out explicitly that the interpretation of history does not always have to correspond to the actual events. The sources to which historians refer may be inadequate, embellished, idealised and even partially or completely inaccurate. We cannot assume that everything that is printed is what actually happened. Even if no deliberate falsifiers were at work, there are plenty of other possibilities for conscious and unconscious distortion.

For example, if it is reported that Lao Tzu rode into solitude on a buffalo, it is easy to see that this is a legend. But if, for example, someone who heard the Buddha wrote an account of his teachings, he may have misunderstood the Buddha and remembered him poorly when he wrote it down. If a third party copied the account, there may have been transcription errors. In addition, the transcriber may have added his own thoughts and corrected the translation in good faith.

We all know how someone can be declared dead. One person reports that Mr Smith has had an accident, the next person says it was a serious accident, and the next person sees Mr Smith in intensive care when he has only broken his foot. And a particularly enthusiastic storyteller claims to have heard that he died.

Of course, historical records aren't usually that bad; I just want the reader to be aware that you shouldn't be too attached to the printed words. In our case, it's not so much the accuracy of each sentence as the spirit of the people being reported.

Those who study historical traditions in depth will discover that different books usually report the same thing only in a general sense. For example, I have compared the life of the Buddha in several books and found that not only are the accounts different, but even the names of people, areas or places are not consistent. Sometimes it is more difficult to find the correct spelling for a particular researcher than it is to find the historical data.

Thales of Miletus

Thales of Miletus lived in Greece, was born around 625 BC and died around 545 BC. Thales was a merchant, sailor and philosopher. Otto Zierer describes the meeting with Epimenides from historical data as follows:

A small brown sail rises above the rippling sea that stretches between Cape Zephyrium and the small island of Dia, and gradually the hull of the ship becomes visible, a pot-bellied box as merchant seamen love it. The skipper steers towards the landmark of Dia, behind which opens the gentle bay of Knossos.

The merchant T*hales of Miletus* is the patron of the arriving ship. He takes care of the formalities at the port, pays the duty, provides information about his goods and orders the ship's captain to unload the cargo. Unconcerned about the burning sun, he walks through the streets, which are deserted at this hour. He is visiting his old friend *Epimenides*, whom he respects for his wisdom and knowledge.

Epimenides lives in a simple wooden house just outside the city, near the legendary 'Dictaean Cave'. A sense of mystery and magic surrounds him. His long flowing robes, embroidered with enigmatic symbols, are reminiscent of oriental priests, Chaldean

magicians or Egyptian scholars.

The two men now sit opposite each other in a somewhat gloomy room filled with strange household objects. In front of them is a large funnel-shaped jug, painted with naive depictions of heroic sagas, in which dark Cretan wine is mixed with water. Thales, who also sells pottery on a large scale, expertly determines that the 'krater' was made in a Corinthian workshop. Although he himself sells pottery from Athens and Miletus, he admits without envy that the Corinthian works are still the more artistic.

“It has been a long time,” says Thales, “since we last saw each other, for the voyage to Crete has become rare for our ships. Miletus' trade shifted to Egypt. Since King Psammetich allowed the Hellenic merchant to found the settlement of Naukratis in the Nile delta, a market of world importance has quickly emerged. We have a common sanctuary there, the 'Hellenion'; Naukratis has become the meeting place for all Greek ships...”.

Epimenides raises his hand in smiling defence.

“Let's talk about the other, the essential thing, my friend! I don't care whether the Hellenic trade in Naukratis is good or bad. Egypt has more to give than wheat, oil and dates.”

“Very well, let's drop it!”

Thales is silent for a moment, then continues.

“I was an attentive listener and student in an Egyptian priest school for a while; by the way, I was not the only Greek there, I also met the young Solon from Athens... do you know him?”

“Of course I've heard of him. But tell me, what have you learned about the cult of Isis, about the secrets of necromancy and the sacred, ancient pictographic writing? Lucky you, you have been able to hear the dark magic of the mysteries from the mouths of men who, like no other mortal, know how to solve the riddles of the underworld!”

Thales has risen and is stepping through the doorway, the sunlight streaming into the dark room.

“What do I care about mysticism and magic! Look at the sun, the sea, the trees and the blue sky, that is reality and true life. What I wanted from the priests was their knowledge of arithmetic, astronomy and meteorology, things that are important to me as a sailor and merchant.”

Epimenides reaches for an amulet around his neck, as if to appease the offended spirits of the afterlife.

“What worries you have, Thales! Your heart is filled with the affairs of this world, but you pay no attention to the only thing that matters, the fate of your soul. You have changed little!”

Thales takes long sips from the wine goblet.

“You should go to sea, Epimenides, and you would understand many things you are unaware of in the company of your gods and demons. The world looks different to one who turns away from it than to one who faces it eye to eye.

When you have sailed for days at the mercy of a nutshell, when there is no beach, no island, no distant mountain peak to catch your eye, and you are standing at the bow of the ship, pondering, or when stormy winds are hissing by, churning up the grey waves, heavy cloudbursts are pouring down rain, you have tied yourself to the mast and you are standing there - a lonely man in the middle of the endless, cruel universe - then, my friend, other thoughts come to you than here on the safe mainland. You have time to ponder, nature and your heart both urging you to do so. Facing the raging sea, I have often wondered: where does it all come from? Then again, you travel as a merchant through foreign lands, you see other people, you hear prayers before the altars of incomprehensible deities, you stand before the gigantic monuments of past millennia, the pyramids on the Nile. The breath of the distance, the breath of the dead land, the cry of the stone for eternity touches you. Then the other question arises: what is all this becoming and passing away, the inescapable cycle that fatally embraces us? This is the thoughtfulness of the sailor and traveller, dear friend, it is different from that of the priest...”.

Epimenides' eyes glowed with the fire of a fanatic.

“You ask questions that have long been answered. The riddle of the origin, purpose and destiny of all existence has been solved. You know the great secret that unites the Orphic League; if only you would come to us, Thales, you would no longer need to ponder or search in vain!”

“I want to think and search, yes,” Thales replied vehemently. “It is not enough for me to be presented with the ready knowledge of priests and seers: Here, accept it! That is the way of the world, and there is no other way! No, when I speak of knowledge, I mean only that which I myself have explored and understood, that which really convinces me.”

“Not everyone can walk the long path to enlightenment, but you should strive for the secret of mystical revelation, Thales, that is the highest human purpose. The eternal things were revealed to us by the Thracian Orpheus. No man will ever learn more than the gods have revealed to him...”

The merchant smiles in disbelief.

“Of whom no one knows for sure if, when and how he lived!”

“That is what our enemies say! Orpheus lived! How else could he have founded the Order and left his teachings?”

“Oh no, my friend! All these mysteries and magic come from Asia, I know the melody of the Babylonian magicians. The cult of Adonis, the secret teachings of Persephone and the message of Dionysus - all this is not Hellenic, it is the thoughts of foreigners who are reaching the hearts of our people. Basically it is a fear of demons, a fear of the abyss of death. Homer did not know the goddess of the dead, Hecate, who is worshipped today by superstitious people. I have attended their celebrations, and they were the same rites as those of the Babylonians, dedicated to their gloomy goddess

Labartu.

Look around you among the living, and you will see that everywhere the magic of Babylon is gaining power in their hearts. In the spring they celebrate the Anthesteria, which was completely unknown to our ancestors, in the manner of the Babylonian festival of all the dead. To protect themselves from ghosts, they chew hawthorn leaves and smear the doorposts with pitch. For the dead, they place pots of seeds and earth fruits, and throw honey cakes and delicacies into the abyss. When the festivities are over, these fools, with fear and trembling, call out to the souls of the dead whom they fear: 'Get out, you Keren, the Anthesteria are over!'"

"It is true," says Epimenides, "but what can you say? Is it not like a silver lining in the sky, heralding a dawn, when people begin to feel that not only the shadowy existence of the underworld is inevitably before them, but that there are powers and forces to overcome death and gain resurrection and new life?"

"You speak of feeling, Epimenides, I speak of knowing! And hope? It has always been considered a deceiver, speaking of things that do not exist. No, friend, I will not succumb to the seduction of these Asian doctrines. I cannot believe in the return of Adonis, the resurrection of Persephone and Dionysus, the conqueror of death. I long for a rational explanation of the world. I build the order of the world out of knowledge".

The priest stood up.

"Listen to me, O Thales! When you ask: Where does everything come from? Orpheus answers that it was the night and the yawning void, the two-headed dragon, from which the egg of the world was born".

"Stop," Thales interrupts the enthusiastic man, "these are all confused, unprovable assertions. Those who believe in these fairy tales will not think seriously about the origin of things. I don't want symbols, I want knowledge. And that's why the Orphic secret doctrine seems to me more an obstacle to research than a tool!"

"But how do you want to fathom the mystery of creation, you, a bound man, subject to chance? Yes, if we were gods, if we possessed Olympian clarity and wisdom! Have you never felt the dichotomy of human nature? The yearning upward striving of the soul and the earthy pulling down by the heaviness of the body? Does not the voice in your own breast tell you that you need the salvation of the supernatural powers?

Would you share with us, just once, our nocturnal Dionysian celebrations, this growing and rising through rhythmic song, wine and dance and incense! And then, when the wings of the soul begin to stir, when you feel that you are stepping over the heaviness of the mind, but always with the insurmountable awareness that you are mortal and remain bound to the earth - that is intoxication and exaltation, uplift and downfall at the same time!"

"I desire neither intoxication nor liberation. I have learnt sobriety, courage and defiance. Whether it is useful or not, I have learned the secrets of the world with clear thinking. This does not lead to intoxication, but it also protects against sobering crashes, does not disappoint and leads to real results...".

“By denying the world of shadows, you also deny the light, you presumptuously oppose the realm of demons and gods, a madman who wants to be equal to the eternal!”

Thales is not deterred.

“Let me explain my opinion. The dull masses regard the eclipse of the sun as a terrible sign of supernatural powers. But Egyptian scholars have shown me the causes of such eclipses and how they can be predicted decades in advance. With this insight, the phenomenon has lost all its horror for me and has become something understandable. It seems to me that it is similar with many, if not all, of the mysteries of existence. If we could explore, explain and control the universe, the world would be simpler, more natural and free of fear. The gods and demigods that Homer and Hesiod so childishly endowed with human characteristics set no limits for my eternally questioning mind. I must know and understand, or I shall never find peace.”

“And for what?” cries Epimenides. “What is at the end of your journey? What god awaits you when you fall from existence into the abyss of the underworld?”

“No god or demon awaits me, my friend. It is the selfless love of wisdom, of philosophy, that drives me...”

A discussion in Alexandria

A man who lived in Greece in the third century B.C. and taught as a mathematician and physicist has come down to us under the name of *Archimedes*, 'the arch thinker'. He discovered the square root, solved cubic equations, found the laws of the center of gravity, the inclined plane, the lever, and the elevator. He built burning mirrors and catapults, mechanical irrigation systems and block and tackle. When he realized the power his block and tackle could develop, he is said to have been so excited by his discovery that he made the statement, “Give me a firm footing and I will lift the earth off its hinges!”

While investigating a difficult legal case, he had a far-reaching insight: King Hieron's goldsmith was suspected of not using all the gold he was given to make a crown, but of adding silver to keep the weight down, but making the metal worse. Archimedes said to himself: 'If silver, which is lighter than gold, has been added, then the volume of the crown must be greater for the same weight than if it had been made of pure gold. But how could the volume of the ornate crown be measured?'

He pondered the problem for a long time. One day he took a bath in a bathtub filled to the brim. The overflowing water gave him the answer.

All that was needed to solve the case was to place an identical bar of gold, like the one the goldsmith had received, in a full tub of water and measure the amount of water that overflowed. If the experiment were then repeated with the crown, more water would overflow than with the gold bar, assuming that silver had been added to the jewellery. Archimedes' suspicions were confirmed and the impostor was exposed.

Otto Zierer tells how Archimedes travelled to Alexandria and met *Eratosthenes of Cyrene*, the director of the library and academy. The students and teachers of the Museion reverently call him 'Mr Beta', after the second letter of the Greek alphabet. They say that

Eratosthenes deserves to be named after the intellectual heroes Homer, Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle.

Eratosthenes was a master of all the sciences, and Archimedes, who worked almost exclusively in mathematics and physics, admired him for his versatility. The director of the Museion wrote an important work on ancient comedy and continued Euclid's mathematics; he discovered the formulas for doubling cubes and indivisible numbers and calculated the inclination of the ecliptic. His geographical and astronomical researches bordered on the miraculous. To measure the earth, he led an expedition to Syene, 5,000 stadia up the Nile. By determining the angle of the zenith at the same position of the sun, he achieved the incredible: using the difference in the arc of a degree between Alexandria and Syene, he calculated the circumference of the Earth to be 252,000 stadia!

When Archimedes first entered the library, accompanied by Eratosthenes, he was overwhelmed by the size and splendour of the halls and rooms. The light from the newly lit lamps illuminates the richly carved ceilings and reflects off the polished marble of the columns. The abundance of wooden scaffolding on which hundreds of thousands of rolls of papyrus are stored in bookcases is impossible to miss. “We are proud to have all the writings written in the inhabited world, without exception,” Eratosthenes tells his guest.

On the eve of Archimedes' departure, Eratosthenes takes his guest to the roof garden of the Mouseion. The most prestigious scholars of the High School were waiting for the Syracusan at a farewell banquet. *Chrysippus of Soli*, head of the Stoic School in Athens since the death of Cleanthes, was also invited to the celebration.

After the excellent meal, which was a testimony to the ancient culinary art of the Egyptians, the conversation around the table turned to a fundamental question of philosophy, the problem of how to live.

Ephialtes, one of the philosophers at the Museion and a follower of the teachings of Epicurus, passionately defends the sensible, grateful enjoyment of the things that the day brings.

“According to the tradition of our school,” he tells us, “Epicurus used to gather his friends from time to time in the park of Athens for beautiful feasts. He loved wine, song, Lydian dancers, spring and the beauty of the Attic countryside. Pleasure is the greatest good, said Epicurus, but it does not consist in the gratification of base desires, but in the liberation of the soul from pain, fear and lack of self-control, and in the affirmation and acceptance of the natural as it presents itself to the mind in perception.”

Chrysippus nods at the scholar. “We Stoics also teach self-control and equanimity in accepting what fate brings. The insight that fate is predetermined and a virtuous life based on reason are the fruits of philosophical reflection on the meaning of life.”

“As the Master says,” the Epicurean continues, “philosophy gives its disciples irrefutable certainty and, in this certainty, happiness.”

Epimenides, one of the teachers at the Museion, protests that no human being has this capacity. “Pyrrho of Elis teaches that true happiness depends on the conviction that it is impossible to attain ultimate knowledge. There is only probability, not certainty.”

Ephialtes passionately defends the validity of the Epicurean view.

“Why shouldn't Epicurus' path lead to certainty and happiness? His system is complete: logic leads the mind to a certain knowledge of the world and its relations - it reveals nature to us in its methodical and sober order. It is only through the intellectual penetration and clarification of all natural interrelationships that the horrors of superstition, the fear of life and the restlessness of eternal doubt are dispelled. Once you have realised that the world was not created by gods and demons, but is the work of forces and materials acting according to natural laws, once you have followed the advice of Epicurus and accepted the teaching of Democritus that everything that exists has arisen from the diverse structure of ultimate and indivisible small particles of matter - the atoms - then every mystery is solved for you.

Only brooding creates restlessness in the soul; the discerning will never be unhappy. They will enjoy life with joy”.

When Chrysippus objects and contrasts the Epicurean enjoyment of life with the principle of virtue as the only true and worthwhile thing, Ephialtes raises his wine cup to the guest from Tarsus with a conciliatory smile.

“Don't misunderstand me, Chrysippus: Epicurus has nothing in common with the school of Aristippus of Cyrene, who carelessly teaches that physical pleasure - eating, drinking, feasting and enjoying - is the purpose of a wisely spent life, since after death everything is uncertain! Epicurus means the subtle, intellectual pleasure, the balanced tranquillity of the soul and mind in which all suffering and pain are overcome”.

The calm, dispassionate voice of Epimenides interrupted the speaker.

“I think,” he says, “that the basic theses of the Epicurean and Stoic systems are debatable. Pyrrho of Elis, who founded the system of sceptical philosophy, agrees with Epicurus that the goal of life is happiness, but he does not make certain knowledge of the world and its interrelations a condition for this goal; I repeat: there is no absolute certainty. I am always concerned when judgments based on reason are presented as unassailable. One should be more modest and not claim to be able to say anything with absolute certainty. Because we humans, our reason, and our senses are subject to error, every statement must begin with 'maybe' or 'it seems so'.”

Eratosthenes, who, like all Greeks, loves a lively debate, sometimes lightened by a joke, turns to Epimenides.

“Well, my dear fellow, when I observe, for example, that your wise head is as bald as one of the model balls in the Hall of Mathematics, I can assert this fact without qualification and without a 'perhaps'! Or can I?”

Laughter erupts, but the sceptic's face remains unmoved.

“I doubt that too,” he replies, “it may appear that I have no hair, but who can claim that as an undeniable certainty? Everyone sees only what their senses reflect, everyone is trapped by the inadequacy of the earthly. Even with the best instruments and tools, our knowledge always comes back to the use of the five senses - and thus to five uncertainties. Timon of Phleion, a disciple of the great Pyrrhon, says: At the beginning of every quest for

knowledge there are three questions. First: What are things like? Second: How do we relate to them? Third: What are the consequences of our behaviour? He also gave the answers: to the first question, all things are impermanent and uncertain; to the second question, we must not trust our perceptions and ideas; and to the third question, because there is an ocean of insecurity, fluctuation, change and uncertainty around us, the soul should reflect upon itself, strive for inner silence and achieve the happiness of non-decision, of surrender!"

"That would make all scientific research pointless," Archimedes objected. "All searches for absolute truth, especially in the fields of physics, mathematics, astronomy, medicine and law, would be doomed from the outset. And I think I can say that Hellenic science has made considerable progress since Aristotle and has been of great service to mankind!"

"That is doubtful," cries Epimenides across the table, "very doubtful! Have people become happier, calmer, more peaceful or better? Have they stopped dying, stopped making war?"

"You doubt everything," says Archimedes, raising his voice, now also showing agitation. "But I, Archimedes of Syracuse, answer you: We have helped humanity! Since Herophilos, here at my side, our great physician, discovered a new method of curing eye diseases, many people have retained their sight and are happier than if they had been condemned to blindness! Since Eratosthenes discovered his formulas for body content, Egyptian officials no longer have to measure bushel by bushel when they want to determine the amount of wheat stored in a village. By measuring the height and circumference of the filled granary, the contents can be easily calculated. Since I discovered the law of the proportions of the weight of bodies, it has been possible to calculate the exact weight of any block of stone, however large, from its contents; this gives the bridge-builders, the architects of temples and houses, certainty in their static calculations. It is no longer necessary to take up all the thrust and pressure with multiple safety measures; it is possible to calculate in advance how strong a supporting wall, column or vault must be to withstand the pressure and thrust of the masses resting on it. These are just a few examples of what science has done for mankind!"

"You have not refuted my actual objection, Archimedes," Epimenides insists. "I ask again: has mankind as a whole been made happier, greater, better by the insignificant inventions of chance which you arrogantly call knowledge? On the contrary, it seems to me that people are increasingly losing their footing, that they have become more hungry for life, more unstable, more cruel! Exact science cannot make people happy; it gropes along like a blind man on a road that leads nowhere!"

Contradictions are heard everywhere, but only Chrysippus agrees with the sceptic.

"Perfection is given only to the gods. Our existence is governed by laws that we will never know, everything is predetermined. Perhaps the day is not far off when the great world fire will be ignited and destroy all existence."

"O Hellas," cries Archimedes in mocking despair, "where have you ended up? In what chaos does your world of thought end? Doubters and those who have given up on destiny give us the goals to strive for! If the Greek world follows this path, then Hellas will perish, then it is time for a younger, more vigorous nation to rekindle the fire that has been

extinguished among the Greeks".

Eratosthenes went over to the wine crater and filled the Syracusan's bowl to the brim.

"Drink, Archimedes, and don't take things more seriously than they are. The time has not yet come, and the ancient wells of Plato and Aristotle are still flowing. And even those of us who, like Pyrrho of Elis and his sceptical school, believe that nothing is infallible, are pioneers of new ideas because we dare to keep working, to keep exploring, despite all the uncertainties, and to reach, if not the truth, then a high degree of probability."

Confucius and Laozi

To understand the lives of people like Confucius and Laozi, we must try to delve a little into the past of China, the 'land of yellow earth'. At a time when the first advanced civilisations of mankind were emerging in the river lands of the Nile, Euphrates and Tigris, a rich agricultural culture was spreading its influence from the settlement areas of the fertile loess landscapes of the Hoang-Ho in the heart of China far north and west into the steppes of Mongolia, traversed by wild herding peoples. Mighty empires rise and fall under tyrannical rulers, gigantic structures such as the Great Wall of China are built, and the palace cities of the emperors are filled with unimaginable luxury, while millions of hard-working artisans and peasants eke out an agonising existence in poverty and oppression.

Over long periods of history, Chinese civilisation and culture spread beyond the boundaries of political and military power into the boundless vastness of the East Asian region, bringing the light of higher morality, the philosophy of Confucius and Laozi, and eventually, in conjunction with Indian intellectual property, the teachings of Gautama Buddha, the Enlightened, to peoples from the Himalayas of Tibet to the islands of Japan.

The world of the people who emerged in the land of yellow earth and great rivers was a world of farmers in constant struggle with the changing earth, the wilderness, the animals and the untamed waters. They tried to bring order out of chaos and harmony out of the inextricable.

The stories of Chinese posterity are replete with tales of the legendary emperors who tackled and temporarily mastered the greatest of all Chinese creations: the taming of the rivers in the land of flowing loess. The praise of the emperors Yao and Yü, who built dams and canals, echoes through the generations.

Through all the myth-making, one trait shines through: the urge for a higher order, the quest for harmony out of chaos. The original Chinese man was a farmer, struggling with the earth and the wilderness, the sky and the river for his arable land; his existence is an eternal struggle between the elemental, untamed forces and his will for regulation, order and reason.

Even in the late Stone Age, the Chinese were aware of the need not only to regulate their external life through clearing, agriculture and water management, but also to bring man's mind and soul into harmony through education. These basic principles, already apparent in prehistoric times, lead into the future of actual Chinese history and into the clearly emerging centuries of the Yellow Cultures to the present day.

Many centuries before Christ, the mighty Chou Empire was established under King Weng and his son Wu. The Chou thoroughly and systematically destroyed all memory of the previous dynasty, which was no longer able to maintain the great order of the world.

In the mountain town of Feng stands the fortress-like castle of the new emperor, where he summons his loyal followers, generals and ministers after victorious campaigns. From the height of Chou Castle, the arching gongs sound.

There is no hall in the castle large enough to hold the crowds of nobles who want to greet the emperor. So the court officials assigned seats in the large courtyard, whose

wooden arcades form a square around the cistern. A throne was set up and covered with tiger and leopard skins.

The arched gongs sound again, a band of musicians beats skin drums and strikes sound stones, flutes sound and bronze cymbals ring as the bamboo gate opens and Emperor Wu appears with his male relatives.

Emperor Wu is still young. His face is mask-like and opaque. His energetic chin and the fire in his dark eyes, flashing from narrow lids, speak of drive and power. His speech is calm and of natural dignity.

He speaks of the years of war, of the victories and conquests that gave the Chou a vast empire that stretched from the Dragon Gate Mountains to the sea and even to the distant peninsula of Korea. More than fifty new provinces fell under the Chou armies.

“Conquest is nothing”, said the Emperor, “order is everything”.

Now that the fighting was over, it was the Chou's first duty to restore harmony to the world. The ruling house must never forget that the fall of the Yin Emperors was caused by internal chaos, that the dynasties of the Hsia and the Yin perished because of the disturbed order.

“Therefore, it is our duty,” cries Wu in a raised voice, “to restore order to our own house and to all the houses of the land forever.”

He solemnly proclaims the new laws of succession and rank.

“I have won great victories and conquered a vast empire,” the Emperor says, a smile lightening his rigid features. You, my loyal subjects, have helped me to do so. Now you shall help me to rule it. But rule means order and harmony. The lowly shall obey the high, and the Emperor shall stand above all. It is my intention to divide the Chou Empire into districts, and each of you will administer a part of the land and report to me from time to time. Therefore, I will appoint a Kung or a Duke as the ruler of the provinces. Step forward, my 'little honourable one', brother T'an, I appoint you Duke of Chou! Rule the Chou heartland in the Dragon Mountains!”

The wide silk robes flutter again, and applause echoes from the palace walls as the young Duke bows to the Emperor and receives a purple cap as a sign of his dignity. Afterwards, generals, ministers and notables of the land are summoned to receive the title of Duke from the Emperor himself.

Once again, Emperor Wu takes the floor.

“The Empire has been founded, the order of the world restored,” he proclaims, “but never forget that any order is only as good as the hearts of the men in whose hands it lies. As long as the duke is a friend, father and protector to his nobles and peasants, as long as the knight is a good neighbour and a well-meaning champion to his peasants, there will be harmony between throne and people and peace between heaven and earth.”

Every five years, Emperor Wu travels across his vast empire. Pulled by fiery stallions, his carriage races along the dusty roads of the provinces, followed by spearmen.

During the years of inspection, the emperor travels to the sacred mountain in the east in the second month of spring, to the sacred mountain in the south in the summer, to the sacred mountain in the west in the eighth month, and to the sanctuary on the mountain in the north in the eleventh month, when the snow is falling.

The dukes send their knights to meet him from afar and escort the Lord of the Yellow Empire to the towns and marketplaces. Emperor Wu himself fits into the great harmony of life. Wherever he goes, he asks for the elders and invites them to join him so that they can report on the state of the country. He never relies on the reports of his vassals alone. If a man over eighty lives somewhere, the ruler will spare him the journey to court and visit him himself, such is his respect for age and wisdom.

He often mingles with the crowds at the market, examining the goods on display, brought in by caravan from the far south or west. When folk singers perform somewhere, he has them brought to his tent camp and listens to their ballads and songs with delight.

For all his kindness and gentleness, Wu never forgets that he came to power through military might and struggle. He crushes resistance with a firm hand and crushes the rebellion of insurgents.

The Emperor has given the Yellow Empire the highest possible order and harmony between heaven, earth and mankind. Fate deems his task fulfilled and releases him. He dies young, leaving the empire to his underage son, a disciple of the Duke of Chou.

But Lord T'an, the 'Little Honourable', is himself a part of harmony, far from personal ambition and the pursuit of power. He faithfully administers the people and the state for his growing heir. Even centuries later, the reign of the Duke of Chou is praised as a golden age of peace and justice. A peasant poet writes a quatrain:

The crowd seeks gain,
The honourable seeks glory.
The good man values success,
The wise man values only the soul!

Under the mild and just rule of the Duke and his successor, the pressure of the belief in ghosts and demons on the people's souls also eases. Since people no longer live in fear of the unknown and the untamed, there is no need for explanations from ghosts and devils from a world of terror. Slave sacrifices to the gods are abolished and punished.

The great Duke, who loved music and saw in it a means of moderating the libidinous and unbridled in man, created a mighty orchestra in which everyone had a part to play, graded according to importance, efficiency and rank. But even he was powerless against the future, for in the bosom of the future lurked the dangers that would come upon the Chou people from all sides if an emperor did not master the fine art of conducting this mighty state orchestra.

The system of feudalism that he and his elder brother Wu had introduced as a new order was as good as it was bad, as were the bearers of the various power groups. As long as strong rulers and dukes, counts and barons convinced of their patriarchal role were the representatives of this noble order, everything went well. But woe betide the state of the Chou when it was ruled by weak emperors, and when the shepherds who were supposed to

lead and protect the people themselves became robbers and wolves!

The Duke's spirit continued to work long after his death. The fifth emperor of the Chou dynasty still held the reins of the empire firmly in his hands, although the tax burden on the peasants had increased and the corrupting wealth of the feudal class had grown. The treasures accumulated over five generations of peaceful development and the undisputed power of Emperor Mu had already led to unnecessary and hopeless military expeditions into the far west, which, with its mountains and deserts, still lurked like a mysterious, dark gateway to adventure.

After the death of Emperor Mu, the decline began.

Arbitrary land grants to dukes and barons, and repeated elevations of the high nobility, increased the power of the feudal lords throughout the empire. The original fiefdoms developed into almost independent kingdoms under the weak Chou emperors; the earls felt like dukes and insisted on their unlimited power; the barons, as lords of life, death and property, sat at the head of the peasants and realised that it was up to them alone to squeeze even more out of the peasants, thus becoming even more powerful and richer.

The time of truth seekers like Confucius and Laozi was approaching.

Confucius

In what is now Shantung Province, near the city of Dsou, lies the sacred mountain of Mu. Here, on the mountainside, in a cave, in 551 BC, a pilgrim praying to the mountain gods was surprised by her difficult hour. She gives birth to a boy and names him Confucius.

At the same time, in the far west, the great king Cyrus conquers Babylon and leads the people of Israel out of Babylonian captivity. In Greece, the great philosophers of the Ionian school were leading Western thought in new directions; in Olympia, the youth of Hellas were meeting for national sports competitions; in India, the enlightened Buddha was gathering his disciples and teaching world renunciation and self-redemption.

Kungfutse's father is a descendant of the old Yin imperial dynasty. However, the family has long since lost all influence, although it counts important soldiers, politicians and high officials among its ancestors. Kungfutse had been preceded by nine sisters, he was the tenth child, and his birth was a sensational event. That is why the mother had undertaken a pilgrimage to the spirits of the mountains, as the holy mountain Mu had been described by astrologers as the most auspicious place for the future of the still unborn child.

The small feudal state of Lu, to which Confucius's hometown belonged, was ruled by tyrannical dukes. The old families were highly respected but had no influence on the political leadership of the country.

His father was already seventy years old when Confucius was born, and died when Confucius was still an infant. Free from fear of demons and superstition, his mother taught the boy the ancient legends and traditional wisdom. After years of domestic preparation, she sent the inquisitive youth to the school of the wise Mandarin Yen.

When Kung has outgrown the Mandarin's teachings, his family's poverty forces him into the hard school of life. He becomes a granary manager and tax official. As he fulfilled all his duties with great conscientiousness, the State Ministry of Lu promoted him to supervise the herds in his home district. It was in this job that he gradually became familiar with the problems of administration and economics, and he realised that the old order had also been broken in these areas, that it was no longer in harmony with the mighty spirits of the mountains from which China's destiny sprang.

At the age of twenty, Confucius gave up his post as herdsman of Lu and, despite his youth, gathered disciples around him to teach a new order. In a country where age is everything, opening a school at such a young age is an outrageous undertaking. But in the years that followed, the young scholar's reputation spread far beyond the city of Dsou. Young, ambitious people sought out the scholar to learn from him. One of them is Dsi-Gung, who holds a modest court post in the imperial city of Loyang and is only temporarily in the land of Lu.

On his return to the imperial city, a high-ranking mandarin and minister of the emperor asks him:

“Is your master a saint? What abilities does he possess?”

Dsi-Gung replied, “If Heaven allows it, young Kung will be a saint one day. He has many wonderful abilities.”

During one of Dsi-Gung's later visits, Master Kung hears of the Mandarin's interest and asks Dsi-Gung: “How does the Minister know me, a poor man? My youth was poor, I do not belong to the rich and powerful, the only thing I have acquired is knowledge. But I no longer seek knowledge - today I seek wisdom.”

The student said in awe: “Who knows, as you do, the way of the ancient rulers, the traditional books of the ancients?”

Confucius modestly lowered his eyes.

“O Dsi-Gung, I search down here to penetrate up. When I see a worthy man, I strive to be his equal. But when I see an unworthy person, I first examine myself inwardly. I am not yet wise, but I stand firmly on the ground of truthfulness. At thirty a man must stand firm.”

“What is it, O Master, that you are striving for?”

“I try to become noble myself before I teach it to others.”

“What, O honourable one, do you call being noble?”

“The noble man understands the law, the inferior man understands profit. The noble man demands much of himself, the inferior man of others. The noble man seeks inner value, the inferior man seeks possessions. There may be a noble man who is not kind, but there is no inferior man who is kind. The superior man is not judged by trivial matters, but he can take upon himself great responsibilities. The inferior man cannot take great

responsibility, but he can be judged by trivial things."

Tseng-Tze, one of the other students, speaks up when Confucius remains silent.

"Remember, O Dsi-Gung, there are two words in which Master Kung's wisdom is contained: Kung, which means to fulfil one's duties as a human being to the utmost, and fu, which means to act towards others as one would act towards oneself, or to love one's neighbour as oneself. But four things are completely absent from the nature of the Master. He has no prejudices, no selfish desire for recognition, no stubbornness, and no sense of selfishness."

At the age of thirty, Master Kung is appointed the tutor of the imperial prince Ching-wang at the court of Loyang. This trip to the capital is of great importance to Confucius, for everywhere he goes he encounters evidence of the empire's great past.

He walks through the palace district as if in a dream, seeing the mighty mythical creatures carved in stone that stand guard on the paths to the imperial tombs; he sees the high carved gates in front of the ancestral temples, the gilded tiles and the boldly curved roof ridges with bronze dragons. Once, this ancient world of emperors was orderly and powerful, filled with benevolence, justice and truthfulness, radiating culture, education and knowledge.

The library of the Loyang Palace is immensely rich. Its lacquered shelves hold thousands of works of all kinds. Most of the books are stacked bamboo tablets marked with red strips of cloth. Some newer editions are painted on delicate linen cloths, rolled up and stored in precious book boxes, from which the purple title strips also hang.

Confucius meets Laozi

The scholar of Dsou spends many hours and days in the 'Hall of Light' studying the wisdom of the past. On one of these days of peace and happiness, the silence of the Hall of Light is suddenly disturbed. The friends and disciples Dsi-Gung, Tseng-Tze, Chin and Tze-Kung burst through the great silk-covered bamboo door and report, full of excitement and whispering in reverence, that Laozi, the great Laozi, has been a guest of the Duke in the palace for a few minutes.

Confucius' eyes light up. Silently, he puts down his quill and stands up. "This day is a sign from heaven," he says solemnly.

At 85, Laozi is almost a living legend. The old man once ran the library at the court of the Chou emperors. But when he saw the inexorable decline of the court, he left. Far in the western mountains, at the border pass of Hanku, the pass guard Yin-Hi is said to have stopped him.

The guard said to the old man: "I see, my lord, that you wish to go into solitude. I beg you, for the sake of humanity, write down your insights in a book and don't let the wisdom of your old age be lost."

Laozi had sought the silence of the wilderness and found refuge in a mountain cave, where he wrote his book on the world principle of Tao and the concepts of the highest

virtue. For Laozi, virtue meant being at one with the spirit of Tao, the harmony of reason and life in the world. Tao is a cosmic principle, the great secret current of being that only the wise know. Since life, happiness and pain, as well as death, love and greatness, are only changing phases of the ceaselessly flowing stream of existence, only a fool would try to resist his destiny.

“Knowledge is useless, action unnecessary. Desires are harmful, wealth, honour and all the pleasures and pains that our senses offer us are as vain as dreams.”

Having completed his great work, Laozi returns from solitude to the world of men, and one of his first stops is the palace of Loyang.

The entire royal household, including the emperor and the crown prince, have gathered around Laozi in the 'Hall of Enlightenment'. In the middle of the large room, the old man, wrapped in long, simple robes, is huddled. With narrow eyes that reveal no human emotion, he looks inquiringly at the young scholar who approaches him humbly and with many bows. Nothing changed in the old man's face, which was marked by pain, disappointment and loneliness and had reached a state of ultimate spiritualisation.

The courtyard is silent and the eyes of all present are fixed on the two sages, whose names are known and respected far and wide.

At first, Laozi's voice is barely audible, as if he were talking to himself.

“It is useless to work for earthly things. The masses are lethargic and always fall back into dullness. It is unworthy of a wise man to resist them; it is better for him to withdraw into the solitude of his soul, to try to fathom the secrets of his soul, to explore the secrets of creation, and to fight his way to self-redemption. In this way, at the end of his life, he can rise from the dust into the crystalline purity of the mind and enter the Tao”.

“Venerable one,” Kung replied, “allow your unworthy admirer to have some very different thoughts. The scholar should not shut himself away, but use his wisdom to help the ignorant. But how can he help if he retreats into the seclusion of the Tao? I believe that a nation is always what you create within it. Everything is in man at the same time, the good and the bad, the noble and the base, it depends on what we invoke and touch. It is the duty of every government to bring out the noble. That is why I am looking for the best basic rules for living together, for principles that can reorganise moral relations between people. They may be old and simple, but everyone understands them: Do not hide grain when others lack it! Do not deprive a legal heir of his rights! Do not dig up your neighbour's water! Be kind in earnest and strict without cruelty, be zealous without arrogance! These are laws that make sense to everyone and benefit the community. They are already found in the teachings of the ancient emperors!”

There is a long silence in the hall before the quiet voice of the old man Laozi is heard again.

“The old emperors are dead, their bones are dust, their deeds have been blown away. If a man lives in favourable times, he may rise. But when the times are against him, as they are in our lifetime, his feet walk as if they were bound. I have heard that in times of general scarcity, the wise merchant who has amassed treasure creates the appearance of poverty in order to escape envy. In the same way, a man who has accumulated knowledge

must pretend to be stupid in difficult times to avoid ill-will. Turn aside from your path, Confucius, for you too will not pass through the flood of mud of the lowly!”

“Wise and great scholar! Confucius replied reverently, "Forgive me my great folly. But in my youthful inexperience I believe there is a way to make the world a better place: one must lead the way, encourage others and never tire of it!”

“The people will not follow your example, Master Confucius!”

“You must lower yourself to them with dignity, so that they will learn reverence. You must teach your neighbours filial piety and mercy so that they will be loyal. You must elevate the good and teach the incompetent, so that everyone will strive for the best!”

Laozi's eyes closed, as if from excessive fatigue. “O Confucius!” he says. “What do you want to achieve, you who have no authority? He who is another's son has nothing of his own, for he owes everything to his father; he who is another's official has nothing of his own, for he owes everything to another. Anyone who, like you, exposes the world's shortcomings by his behaviour and preaching is putting himself in danger! Look around you, Master Kung! Look around this hall and see how many who are less learned than you wear gold, crystal and emerald buttons on their caps, while you wear only the badge of the lowest rank!”

“Of course you are right,” Kung replied, smiling, as an indignant murmur went through the ranks of the mandarins. “We often seem powerless, and we often preach to a deserted mountain. When we speak to people, we often reap hatred. And yet I hope relentlessly. It is written in the books: The truth will prevail in the end...”.

Laozi's face is as impassive as it was at the beginning of the conversation. He silently points to the window made of transparent silk gauze. In the square in front of the 'Hall of Enlightenment' stands a bronze statue of a statesman famous for his farsighted prudence. The statue's lips are sealed with three bolts.

“Have you read the inscription?” asks the old man. “Be careful what you say! Don't say too much, for words lead to disaster!”

Laozi struggles to his feet and two servants jump to his aid. The white-haired man put his hand on the boy's shoulder with a kind and loving gesture.

“Great is the solitary man, and he is holy,” he murmured. “All earthly things come from the Tao, and all return to it. The highest human goal is to be one with the world, the ultimate moral goal is not doing but being.”

The Way of Heaven:
He does not argue, yet he knows how to win.
He does not speak, yet he knows how to answer.
He does not call, yet everything comes of itself.
He is gentle, yet he knows how to plan.
The net of heaven is vast,
the meshes are wide - yet nothing escapes him!

“But how,” says Confucius, “can the evils of the times disappear, can humanity improve and rise, without our doing anything? Isn't an idle government more to be feared than a ferocious tiger?”

Something like a smile flits across the old man's wrinkled features.

“Go your way, Kung! You can't help it, it's your Tao. But I tell you, it will be useless toil and in the end disappointment!”

The years go by and Confucius is still a student. His position as a teacher in Loyang exists only in name and brings him little money. He lives in poverty, eating dried meat and fruit that his students bring him as tuition fees. He often tells them about the life of a scholar:

“A man who seeks the truth and is ashamed of his poor clothes and shabby food is not worthy of being spoken to.”

He will not tolerate stupidity or laziness.

“I cannot carve rotten wood, nor whiten a wall of dirty earth. I will not reveal the truth to those who lack enthusiasm, and I cannot help those who cannot express their thoughts. If, after I have explained one side of a problem, you are unable to explain three others, I will no longer teach you.”

During these years, when he had access to the great imperial library at Loyang, Confucius began to compile the 'Book of Laws' from accounts of ancient times, the 'Book of Rites' from the traditions of the Duke of Chou, and the 'Book of Music and Songs' from collections of ancient folk songs.

Whenever he worked on these works, he thought of his life's mission: to improve the state and society and to tame chaos. Among the creative spiritual forces he hopes to use to refine the human soul, music plays an important role.

Time blows away like the loess dust of the hills, it flows like the rain that washes the earth from the mountains into the bed of the Hoang-Ho. Weeks, months and years pass and with them Master Kung's life. He writes sad verses:

The storm howls through the valley,
The summer rain falls thick and heavy.
I am driven from my home,
I wander through foreign lands
without purpose or goal.
Dark, dark is the spirit of man!
In vain does virtue try to help him.
And the years rush by,
Soon desolate old age approaches.

Confucius' years of travel

Confucius decides to leave the court of Loyang. The city of powerless emperors has no place for a reformer. Intrigue, envy and hatred rule the court, the people do not listen to him - Laozi was right!

When spring brings sun and warmth, Master Kung takes up his walking stick and, with a selection of his disciples, travels from royal court to royal court in search of a ruler willing to join him in creating the ideal state of the future, where everyone is happy and content.

But everywhere he goes, he encounters the same decline in state life and social morality.

At Prince Dsi's court the dancers run the show, while at other ducal courts the nobles squander the taxes of the peasants and citizens. Master Kung desperately complains to his students: “If this can be tolerated, what can't?”

His students are also outraged. They call for revolution and rebellion: “For the wise, there are neither nobles nor commoners, only people! All class distinctions must be abolished!”

“That is not wise at all, my friend!” Master Kung reprimands him. “There are noble and common people, just as there are birds of paradise and sparrows. But I make a distinction between those who are born noble without any merit of their own and those who become noble through their own merit. The thoughts of the true nobleman are directed only to the noble, and those of the other to the lowly. In a well-ordered state, social differences are not eliminated, but distributed according to true merit. Everyone must fill the place that belongs to him; a state is good when the prince is a prince, the minister is a minister, the father is a father, and the son is a son.”

When the pilgrims arrive at Prince Yang-ho's residence, they find that all the rumours of corruption and immorality are true. The court celebrates lavish parties every day, while the people starve and are harassed by corrupt officials. In silent protest, Confucius takes up residence in the poor quarter. Even when Prince Yang-ho sends him gifts to lure the famous scholar to his court, the sage stays away from the palace.

A few days later, Confucius is standing at one of the city gates, known as the Rose Gate, when Mongolian slaves carry Yang-ho's litter past, soldiers with bamboo lances accompany the prince, and dancers behind the camp beat cymbals and drums.

Yang-ho beckons the lord over and asks him reproachfully:

“They tell me you pride yourself on being kind? To lock up your treasure in your heart and let the country go astray, can that be called kind?”

“No!” replies Confucius.

“The days and months go by, Master, waiting for you!”

Kungfutse hesitates for a moment.

“Very well,” he says, “I am ready to accept an office...”

Satisfied, the prince waves to his slaves, and to the stamping rhythm of the drums, the colourful procession sets off again.

At home, in the miserable quarters they have rented, the students ask the master why he has followed the call of the notorious tyrant. “Didn't we hear the master speak earlier? A person of inferior character should be shunned by the superior?”

“That is what I have taught,” replied Confucius, “but it is also true that solid material cannot be ground, only polished. Therefore, I will try to improve Yang-ho.”

The attempt failed, and after only a few weeks the end came. The prince was furious when the sage rebuked him for his dissolute lifestyle. He had expected a collaborator, not a critic. Disappointed, he chased the inconvenient man away, and Master Kung left town to the derisive laughter of the court.

“Oh,” he said, “that was not important! If I had been granted a few more years, I would have immersed myself in the Book of Changes, which I still do not know well enough. With its help, I would certainly avoid such big mistakes in the future”.

He learns, reflects, works on himself and waits for the hour that calls him. In the fiftieth year of his life, fate gave him a chance.

A Mandarin in the Duchy of Lu

A former pupil had risen to the high position of mandarin in the Duchy of Lu and recommended to the ruling prince that Confucius should be recalled to his homeland.

An honourable invitation was extended to the master, and he joyfully set out on his journey. But while he was travelling, he heard that the Duchy of Lu was in a desperate situation due to internal and external turmoil.

Master Kung sailed down the river in a royal galley. The wise man made a triumphal entry into the city. The route led through walled courtyards, past splashing fountains, reflecting ponds and tall stone statues. The guest is carried over curved wooden bridges, through a tiny park, onto a terrace lit by lanterns and into a hall with silk banners hanging from its lacquered beams. Behind coral-red latticework, flat steps lead up to the throne.

Mandarins of all ranks stand on either side. Their hands are hidden in their wide sleeves and their arms are crossed in front of their chests, according to the ritual book said to have been written by the Duke of Chou.

Dressed in yellow silk, Ting, the Duke of Lu, sits in front of the green lion banner.

Master Kung bowed deeply, and all the mandarins bowed back. At that moment, he felt as if he had achieved his life's goal. At last he had been given a field in which to sow and perhaps reap a harvest.

Along with Confucius, the Master's old disciples have come from all parts of the country, most of them employed as officials to carry out the Master's ideas as he intended.

His favourite student is Yen-hui, a young man of genius whom Confucius sees as his spiritual heir. He recruits into his inner circle the courageous, quick-witted and energetic Dsi-Lu, who is devoted to him. He also takes on Dsi-Hao, who comes from a peasant family, and Tseng, the conscientious collector of his words and sayings, and his son Li.

In quick succession, the Master rises from the position of City Prefect to the dignity of Minister of Public Works and Minister of Justice. At his formal inauguration as Minister of Justice, he presents his programme of reform to the assembled royal household of Lu.

“Allow your unworthy servant Confucius,” he respectfully addressed the duke, “to attempt to speak about what is the cause of confusion, disorder and numerous other plagues of this world. The sun, moon and stars, clouds, wind, rain and the scorching heat of summer all have their own spirit... All nature lives in harmony, and its order must continue in a healthy human hierarchy. But this order is affected by two diseases: the constant warfare of men against each other and the bad example of the powerful to their subjects”.

There was a murmur of agreement among the students. The mandarins remain unmoved, their faces as rigid as masks.

Confucius takes a deep breath, his face is flushed. What he is about to propose as a practical measure is so new and so outrageous that it will meet with the strongest opposition.

“The old hereditary enemy of Lu is the Principality of Tsin,” he says resolutely. “Both states are arming themselves out of fear of each other and spending their economic wealth on armaments. Moreover, the constant readiness for war must one day inevitably lead to war itself. Therefore, I propose that we abolish our armaments, demolish the fortifications and ban the carrying of weapons in Lu”.

General Tsong, the commander of the troops, jumps to his feet, his face red with rage, and draws his sword.

“If we commit this madness, we will soon be easy prey for Tsin's men!”

The Duke, also visibly astonished, demands silence and asks Confucius to explain his proposal.

The master raised his voice in protest:

“Killing one person is considered a crime and is punishable by death. According to this principle, killing ten people must be ten times as unjust and punishable by ten times the death penalty; killing a hundred people must be a hundred times as unjust and punishable by a hundred times the death penalty. All enlightened people in the world know this and condemn killing as a crime, and yet, in the case of a war in which thousands of people are killed, they do not condemn this killing, but approve of the war. So little do people know what is right and what is wrong.”

Again there is a murmur among the advisers, but Confucius lets no one speak. Now he addresses the Duke directly.

“Now, honoured prince, I come to the second point, the healing of inner wounds. To rule is to do right! If you, Prince, take the lead, who would dare to do wrong?

Every state is capable of awakening two forces in its subjects, the good and the bad. To establish order is to exalt the good and give it power, for the people obey the good. But if you elevate the bad to oppress the good, if you encourage gambling houses, ruthless tax collectors and informers for the sake of taxes, if you allow the police to beat and imprison for the sake of your rule, then you encourage evil and the state decays; for every state is only as strong as the love of the people who support it.

You see, the human mind has five basic moral instincts, which we call Jen, I, Li, Dschi and Hsin. The Chinese character for 'Jen', which means kindness, is made up of two other characters: the character for 'human' and the number for 'two'. So what is kindness? It is the relationship between me and the other, it is right behaviour towards one's fellow man, charity.

That is why I give advice: At home, be polite; in business, be respectful; when dealing with other people, be loyal, even when dealing with barbarians. All this I call 'Jen', the true kindness.

'I' is righteousness, tolerance and respect for the rights of others. By 'Li' I also mean everything that tradition and ritual prescribe: reverence, courtesy, propriety and the cultivation of the arts. Teach people courtesy, O Prince, and you will see how they will try to repay it. Courtesy is the taming of crudeness.

But what is 'Dschi'? It is the urge for knowledge that leads to wisdom. The true human being will never be self-satisfied and content in his pursuit of knowledge and virtue. To have wisdom from birth would be the ideal. To acquire wisdom through learning is the next best thing. To be foolish and still learn is the next best thing. To be foolish and not learn is the way of the ordinary.

'Hsin', the last of the basic human instincts, means reliability or truthfulness! The character is composed of the symbols for 'man' and 'word'; it is meant to remind us that a man must keep his word...”.

The Master bows deeply to the Prince, who rises without a word and thoughtfully ends the audience.

For five years Master Kung and his disciples work to tame man's evil instincts; for five years they build dams against the destructive forces that keep breaking out of human hearts and minds.

The land of Lu, freed from the burden of armaments and the fear of war, prospers and becomes so rich that it is the envy of its neighbours.

The Duke of Tsin tries to break the power of the clever minister by a means as strange as it is effective. He sends eighty seductively dressed slave girls to the Duke of Lu,

his equal in rank, who are as skilled in the arts of dance and song as they are in the arts of love and seduction. As a further sign of honour, the Tsin envoys present an arsenal of war horses, armour and swords.

Master Kung recognises the danger of these gifts, seemingly offered in such neighbourly and peaceful intentions, and begs the Duke to reject them. The dancing girls would seduce the court officials and nobles, who have been converted to modesty and a moderate lifestyle, into ruinous pleasures; the war horses and armour would awaken the martial instincts of the knights, directing their thoughts towards conquest and violence.

But the Duke himself has long been ready to break out of the boredom of a life regulated by order. From now on, the audience hall will remain closed to the uncomfortable admonisher. From the courtyards of the Yamen came the sound of singing, cymbals, shawms, stringed instruments and the noise of boisterous men and women. The drunkards are celebrating their long-awaited liberation from the Virtue Railways. Outside the gates, the duke's former officers try their hand at weapons and taunt the master's students.

For five years Confucius has tried to change human nature, but now he must realise the futility of his attempts.

On the third day, still waiting in vain for an audience with the duke, he resigns his post and leaves the court of Lu. Followed by his most faithful friends, he leaves his homeland and wanders upstream into the boundless land of China. He is now fifty-five years old and without hope.

Years of disappointment

The rain falls in grey lines from the sky, the clouds drift thickly over the mountain slopes. Sometimes the haze lifts to reveal the cones of distant peaks.

The water rages in the gorges of the Wei-ho. Yellow torrents swirl and foam around the cliffs, plunge over rocky barriers and wash along the narrow towpath that generations of haulers have carved into the mountain walls.

The lord and his retinue walk along this rocky path, barely wide enough for two men to walk side by side. They trudge in silence beneath the waterfalls that cascade from the walls and crevices. The fibrous bast coats, usually worn only by poor coolies, offer inadequate protection from the pelting rain.

At night, the tired pilgrims find only a small, dilapidated hut where they can barely light a smoldering fire. In the semi-darkness, sometimes drowned out by the sound of the rain, the plaintive words of Confucius can be heard:

“Humans with their foolish deeds
are a symbol of evil in the land.
They have driven me from my homeland.
Death and destruction are written on their faces;
Virtue flees to distant lands;
I too must go there.

A life's work is now destroyed,
All I have taught forgotten,
I must wander homeless to the end...".

His favourite pupil Yen-hui tries to console him with the injustice of all human fates:
"Oh, how unfair fate is. It rejects a man like you, but the wicked go in silk and gold!"

But Confucius has already regained his composure. He exhorts his disciples to respect the higher powers: "We must not argue with fate. Heaven does not speak."

However, his fellow travellers, who have become disgruntled by the rain and hunger, disagree. Dsi-Lu speaks for them.

"Master, who would not despair in a situation like ours? The sky has poured water on us, the river is raging against us, the mountains are blowing cold winds in our faces, and far and wide there is no benefactor to satisfy our hunger."

"The noble man remains steadfast in adversity," Kung insists, "only the lowly man who comes into adversity becomes unstable."

He lies down calmly on the cold, damp ground, pulls his woollen cloak over his face and closes his eyes.

Again the years creep by, as slowly as the mud that is pushed up the hills of Hsin-gan. The master is now over sixty, sometimes ill and often tired and exhausted. As there is no place for him in the north of the country, the great migration leads back south, to the valley of the Yangtze Kiang. There, fever overcame the weakened man and he lay seriously ill in a poor farmer's hut. The misery is indescribable, and he complains to Yen-hui:

"Oh, if only someone would use me! In twelve months his country would be better off, and in three years it would be finished!"

Even after his recovery, all of Master Kung's attempts to find a protector remain fruitless. The powerful of the Yellow Empire are not inclined to give up their pleasures, passions and greed for power and bow to the ascetic teachings of a scholar.

After numerous adventures full of hardship, only the wilderness of the western mountains remains for Master Kung. After travelling through almost every landscape and region of China, the pilgrims approach the rugged mountains of Setchuan. The Yangtze Kiang and Jalung rivers thunder and roar past sky-high cliffs. This inhospitable landscape, haunted by wolves, bears and tigers, is sparsely populated.

In remote caves live pious hermits, students and followers of Taoism, lonely brooders, magicians, ascetics and escapists. They call themselves the 'Hidden Sages of Laozi'.

Deep inside the Heavenly Mountains, in a high valley, the disciples of Confucius meet the two most famous of Laozi's hermits, the 'Ever-Resting' and the 'Completely Submerged', as they search for the right path. The ascetics are dressed in furs and pull a

wooden plough through the stony ground in pairs.

The 'Completely Submerged', a small, stooped old man with a long beard, asks Dsi-Lu: “Who are you and where are you going?”

“I am a disciple of the wise Confucius of Lu!”

The penitent's eyes flamed with passion.

“We have heard of him! Is he not the simple man who tries to tame the river and dam the flowing loess? So you follow a master who tries to teach people. It would be better for you and everyone else to follow a teaching that preaches solitude!”

When Dsi-Lu later tells the master about this encounter, Confucius is deeply moved.

“Alas, Laozi,” he sighed, “once again you meet me in these ascetics. You predicted hardship and disappointment for me, but I still had to teach people, because animals and birds do not understand me. If I did not speak to men, to whom else would I speak? This world needs a voice!”

Even the silence of the mountains repels him. All his searching and wandering was in vain. The Master is sixty-eight years old when he decides to return to his old home in Lu.

The news of his arrival spread like wildfire. Many people flocked to him, including his disciples, to whom he had once taught the way of life. Only the rulers of the land, the prince, the mandarins and the barons remained silent.

The jester at the court of Dsou, however, often wore the robes of a wandering scholar and sang a new song:

Phoenix, you! Oh, Phoenix, you!
How stunted your life has become!
You can't criticise the past,
and you can't catch up with the future:
Your song is coming to an end!

Confucius smiles when they tell him about the jester's mocking song. He knows that the years of hardship and wandering have not been in vain. Now more than sixty years old, he has found the measure of things. He now knows that the world cannot be changed by one man, not in one generation. He makes no attempt to intervene in the workings of politics as a minister or statesman, but instead deepens his teaching and seeks to preserve it for the future by instilling it in as many receptive hearts as possible.

Confucius spent the last years of his life in intense activity. His four books, the classic Shih-ching, the 'Book of Songs', the Li-chi, the 'Book of Rites', the collection Shu-ching, the 'Book of Documents', and the history of the state of Lu entitled 'Spring and Autumn Annals' are completed. For some time now, the seventy-year-old has been writing his 'Book of Changes' - the I-Ching, his most mysterious work. It is supposed to explain the origin and meaning of life, but in many passages it remains so obscure that even his best students cannot understand it.

At the age of 73, the same age as his father, Confucius breathed out his soul and returned to his ancestors. Friends buried his body and kept watch over the grave for seven days. Soon loyal followers built a temple over the tomb, where his followers gathered on special occasions to discuss his teachings and play his beloved music. Some of his clothes, hats, lutes and books were kept in this sanctuary for a long time.

The time after Confucius and Laozi

The school of Laozi lost itself in romantic and mystical raptures. As the world around them collapsed, the disciples of Tao immersed themselves in dark secrets. They lived as hermits in the mountains, torturing their bodies and trying to become masters of their own destiny through breathing exercises, contemplation, meditation and concentration. People see these Taoist ascetics as magicians, familiar with the powers of heaven and the world of demons. The mountain hermits are feared because they are said to have all sorts of miraculous elixirs and herbal roots that give health and eternal life. It is mainly the rationalists of the classical, practical school, including the spiritual descendants of Master Kung, who oppose this magical myth from which there is no salvation.

One of the best known of these practical philosophers is Master *Mo-tzu*. He was deeply impressed by Confucius, although he vehemently polemicised against the practical incompetence of the pure Confucianists, and rejected many of Master Kung's teachings, which seemed to him to be enthusiasm and useless idealism. He denies the usefulness of rites, ceremonies and sacrifices, and even attacks the great teacher's love of music.

Mo-tzu's harsh criticism stems from a recurring call for practical charity.

“Of what use are dead rites and rapturous music when the people are suffering from three great evils,” he painfully writes. “The hungry have nothing to eat, the cold have nothing to wear, and the overworked have no rest. Can you give them clothes and food by playing pipes and flutes?”

His appeals to humanity are deeply moving and anticipate ideas that would come much later in the Western world.

“Treat your neighbour as you would like to be treated. If your neighbour is hungry, give him food; if he is cold, give him clothes; if he is sick, take care of him; if he dies, bury him!”

But philosophical systems do not tend to change the world, especially when, like Mo-tzu's teachings, they repel the masses with their dogmatic strictness and offend the deeply rooted Chinese tendency towards formulas and rules.

In these disintegrating times, the philosophy of the southern sage Yang Chu is better received. It calls for a 'total life', undisturbed by ambition or greed, too much activity or rebellion against the inevitable and self-torture.

“One hundred years,” says Master Yang Chu, '”s the outer limit of a long life. That a man should live to be a hundred is not the case in a thousand. Even if it were, the childhood spent in the arms of women and the dull age of old age take up almost half. The

time spent unconscious at night and wasting away during the day takes up almost the other half. Should the rest be spent in sickness, pain, grief and sorrow? He may have ten years of happy contentment left, but even then there is hardly an hour of complete freedom from worry. So what is human life? What are its joys?"

He concludes that man has a natural right to enjoy, to dream and to be happy whenever he has the opportunity. True peace of mind and freedom from fear and pain seem to Yang Chu to be the highest fulfilment.

It is a strange coincidence that almost simultaneously in India the Carvakas school and in Greece Epicurus of Samos praised the carefree enjoyment of life as true happiness.

Gautama Buddha

In my dictionary I find the information that Buddha was an Indian religious founder, so you might get the impression that Buddha taught a faith and founded a religion. In fact, men like Buddha, Confucius and Laozi were seekers of truth and people with big hearts. None of them taught a god or even demanded faith. As *Jean-Michel Varenne* says in his book 'Zen', “Buddhism is a religion without a god. Gautama's quest is thoroughly human. It is not based on any divine mission or prophecy. Its message of liberation is not based on a transcendental authority, but addresses people in the here and now. The Buddhist quest is rooted in ordinary life, without reference to some supernatural paradisiacal state.”

I did not find the word faith in any of his sayings, but I did find words like seeking and knowing again and again. Buddha was consumed by a desire for truth, for an explanation of the mysteries of life and for liberation from the wheel of earthly existence to which he felt himself and his fellow human beings were chained.

The time before Buddha

Many centuries before Christ, the Aryan immigrants to India developed a *caste system*, possibly to distinguish themselves from the dark-skinned indigenous population. At that time there were four castes: warriors, priests (Brahmins), farmers and non-Aryans. They passed on their knowledge in an elevated, poetic language called Sanskrit. The Aryans called this sacred knowledge the 'Vedas'. The religion of the Vedas slowly evolved into Brahmanism or Hinduism.

The diversity of life in his country teaches the Hindu that not all beings are equal from birth. An endless ladder of existence rises from the lowest to the highest, from warriors to kings to saints to priests, and ends, after climbing a thousand steps, in the tower of the gods. The more people strive for the highest purity in thought, word and deed in their lives, the closer they are to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Law of the Universe, by which every being must abide, is the highest standard of natural and morally refined living, appropriate to a creature's level of existence. This law is called Dharma.

For this reason, every class of people has its own specific customs, do's and don'ts, governed by religious precepts. Nothing is left to chance, everything is laid down in rules, but the basis of all customs is purely and simply religion. That is why Hindus consider all their customs inviolable; because they are deeply religious.

Towards the end of the period of conquest and migration, the third class, that of the rural common freemen, the Vaishyas, the farmers and artisans, had emerged alongside the clearly superior classes of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas, the noble warriors. The people are divided into castes, each of which has its own specific role to play in the Dharma. The mass of the downtrodden live in the three main castes, with a fourth, despised and 'impure' stratum, the Shudras, later also called pariahs.

Since the Brahmanical view is that Dharma is a natural law established by the gods,

there is no breaking out of this order. Over the centuries, through local subdivisions, inter-caste mixing, division of labour and further splits, the four fields of the castes gradually grew into a tangled undergrowth of numerous sub-castes; but the social division - especially the gulf between the foreign-blooded Dravidians - remained. There is no bridge between the immigrants and the indigenous population. Marriage is forbidden; even eating together is not allowed. If the shadow of a pariah falls on an Aryan farmer's food simmering in the pot, the farmer removes the pot and gives the food to the animals.

The members of higher castes come closer to believing in a single God, while the common people believe in innumerable gods and demons. For members of the higher castes, all beings - animals, humans, demons, angels and lesser gods - are subject to a single, purely spiritual being. Some call this being Vishnu, others Shiva. Neither Vishnu nor Shiva followers are intolerant; they tolerate each other and recognise that Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma and the other gods exist, only for each group a different god is the all-encompassing world spirit.

The individual soul, the Atma, appears in all religions as part of the great, super-personal Brahma - the world soul. Liberation from the many bonds of existence, fate and appearance takes place in a thousand-fold existence, on the endless ladder of reincarnation. The mystical teachings of the Upanishads, in which the transformed religious world of faith is expounded, develop as the final collection within the Vedas.

The solemn verses of these secret priestly teachings explain how beings living on the myriad planes of existence have a body that is divided into two: the earthly, material body and the ethereal body that accompanies the soul on its journey through the world age to its salvation, while the material body dies and is reborn each time.

The spiritual life of India is becoming increasingly diverse and complex. The peasants and artisans live in fear of the spirits and gods, they cling to their rules, caste laws and ancient rites, they sacrifice in the sacred caves, on the hills with the wood-carved temples or at the lotus ponds, they worship animals, trees and mountains and feel lost in the whirling circle of the supernatural, they dwell on the precipice of sorcery, incantation and magic. But many thinkers, seekers and fighters - Brahmins, poets, princes, knights or merchants - break away from everything that has fulfilled their lives and go into the solitude of the mountains or forests. They become ascetics, saints with a beggar's bowl; for it is not the sacrificial service of the priests, not the ambitious activity in the midst of the human world that leads out of the deadly cycle of births, but only meditation, renunciation, reflection, spiritualisation.

They all seek salvation. Existence with its contradictions pains these refined, battle-weary people. The only thing their hearts desire is to merge smilingly with the resting soul of the world, self-redemption.

Holy penitents walk the lands, teaching the thousand paths to the divine - but each of these paths must be walked by man himself.

By the middle of the sixth century BC, there were sixteen Aryan states in northern India, between Peshavar - the capital of the Gandhara country - and Ujjain, the most important of which were the kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala.

Buddha's youth

In the north-east, beneath the Himalayan mountains, lies the land of the Sakya, the fair-skinned, tall people. The rich families of the Sakya nobles and merchants spend the warm season in beautiful groves, in airy pavilions and on the banks of flower-filled ponds.

It was in one of these parks - the estate of Lumbini - that the child Siddhartha Gautama was born to the Sakya prince Shuddhodana and his wife Maya around 560 BC. The boy, whose mother died young, was brought up by one of his father's concubines. His childhood was spent alternately in the royal capital of Kapilavastu and in the vast, fertile parklands of the interior. The Sakyan court of Kapilavastu, like all the courts of the city-states, was a centre of intellectual culture. The officials were poets or philosophers, and the people gathered around singers who recited verses from the Vedas or heroic songs from the time of the conquest, around mysterious saints, and around readers of religious textbooks.

The first impressions of lasting power in the life of the prince Siddhartha are the profound fairy tales. Sitting cross-legged on cushions in the richly painted, carpeted room of his father's house, Siddhartha listened to the words of the storyteller:

“And the minister, who was a wise man, persuaded the king, who had lost himself in the pleasures of life, to go on a pilgrimage, so the king took leave and went on a pilgrimage. When he had paid homage to the god of the sea and sat down, he saw a tree with a golden trunk, with branches of jewels and full of twigs and shoots, rising from the sea. Sitting on the tree in the cushions of a palanquin was a beautiful maiden with a lute in her hand, who sang three verses:

'The seed sown in the land of action, good or bad, is reaped according to the eternal law. The whole world, including gods, spirits and men, depends on fate. And the deeds one has done in a previous birth, good or bad, are the cause of rebirth or destruction for all people...'

When the mermaid had sung this, she disappeared into the depths of the sea as she had risen. But the king returned to his city...”

The narrator's voice sounds solemn and austere, but the boy Siddhartha listens to the mermaid's verses.

What is the meaning of all the pleasures of life if in the end there is still the inevitable death? What does it mean to be a prince, to have a rich house and to play with jewels, if the sum of all one's deeds, thoughts and experiences is nothing but a new rebirth?

But the boy is young, a child who rejoices in the return of spring, who feels the lushness and splendour of summer and the redeeming coolness of winter. Outside the gates of the city of Kapilavastu lie rice fields, watered by the abundant waters of the Himalayas, between canals, sluices, forests and groves, bearing fruit. When the rainy season is over, the Sakya people move into this landscape. The long-horned zebu oxen walk under the neck yoke, the wooden ploughs tear up the steaming earth.

Siddhartha lies under the elephant tree, the sun conjures pearls of light in the foliage, bees and beetles hum in the branches. Grasses sway gently in the spring breeze and

life flows powerfully from the mother earth.

Young Siddhartha is filled with a sense of oneness with all existence. He wants to reach out and embrace the earth, grass and trees, clouds, wind and mountains, animals and people, and dissolve into the great silence of the universe. As he stares silently into the foliage of the trees or the blue of the abysmal sky, the questions that priests and saints try to answer with difficult parables during the long evenings of the rainy season arise: What is the meaning of this life, where does the path lead, what is the goal behind all existence?

In this land, everything is religion; the mystery of eternity dominates every form of life. But there is no truly compelling and universal doctrine. The peasants who plough the land worship countless demons, Shiva, the three-eyed one who sits on the Himalayas and brings destruction or fertility to mankind, Kali, his thousand-armed wife, or the wise god with the elephant's head. The Brahmins in the small wooden temple on the hill believe in Brahma, the soul of the world, and the cycle of deities surrounding him. They speak ancient Sanskrit and know all the verses of the Vedas.

Siddhartha, too, has been introduced by his teachers to the three levels of the Vedic doctrine of the gods: mantra, or worship; brahmana, or theology; and sutra, or instruction.

He closes his eyes to immerse himself in the world of this belief: perhaps Brahma, the world soul, is the goal, and merging with him is the path to salvation. The divine powers of Brahma rise and fall over a thousand times a thousand levels of the universe, according to merit, perfection and purification, or sin, bondage and guilt.

The boy Siddhartha is still crouching under the elephant tree. He sees the pulsating life around him in a new light, the proliferation of plants, the radiance and breathing of earth and sky, the buzzing of bees and the heavy tread of the zebu before the plough. All this is a mysterious chord of many voices. One must strive towards Brahma, the All-One and the Spiritual, one must gradually detach oneself from the material and the mortal in order to gain peace and security of heart.

The boy's lips gently formed words from the Vedic books:

“The body is not permanent, riches do not last forever, death is always near, so why do I collect merit? Invincible, lovable, mild, generous, rich, glorious, one becomes only through the security of life. But there is no unclouded joy in the world, and there never will be.2

No - security of existence is nowhere to be found in the world; death, suffering, sorrow and impermanence are always around. The boy sees a vision of human destiny - a huge wheel to which all existence is chained, a wheel that swings mercilessly up and down, endlessly and - it seems to him - senselessly. There is no escape; Brahma dwells in unattainable distance.

In the evening, Siddhartha tells a parable to the listening courtiers.

“Just as a flame exists only if it is constantly supplied with fuel, so a being exists only as long as it nourishes its will to live by clinging to the world and its pleasures. Existence is a flame that burns in the second and third night watch. It is different in fuel

from the flame of the first night watch, and yet it is the inexorable continuation of it. But how else can the fire be extinguished but by extinguishing it? How else can the liberating darkness come about but by stopping to feed the flame and letting it die?"

The pain that first seized the boy Siddhartha in the midst of spring and the reawakening of life returns, becoming more conscious, more agonising. His boyish shyness before the gods of the ancient Vedas is gone. He no longer believed in the existence of the five world guardians, the Brahmas: Indra, Varuna, Yama, Soma and Vishnu, nor in the four winds, the sun, the moon and the stars.

Siddhartha seeks the depths, the ultimate reality that must lie beyond the image of the gods. Although he has risen above the beliefs of the farmers and herdsmen, he does not despise their beliefs - India is a tolerant place.

It is spring again, and the Sakyas are tilling the fields and moving into the groves of Kapilavastu. The Pariahs work in the rice fields, teams of oxen plough the furrows to the sound of whips and bells. Siddhartha, the prince, sits under a rose apple tree, away from the singing and chattering youths. His eyes are fixed and dull. He has begun to discipline his mind in the manner of yoga - the ascetic practice of self-redemption. He regulates his breathing and sinks into solitude.

Pious penitents have told him of the twenty-four Jain ascetics - the conquerors of the world - and of Vardhamana, the great hero who found the way out of all discord. This Vardhamana is a little older than Siddhartha. He was born in Videna, in the north-eastern Himalayas, into a warlike noble family. At the age of twenty-eight he renounced wealth, princely power and all happiness. He spent twelve years training to become a pure ascetic and founded an order of monks. Followed by his disciples, the omniscient ascetic roamed the land at the foot of the mountains.

Siddhartha learnt the art of yoga - the tension and control of the body and its urges - from one of his emissaries.

The white-robed monks of Vardhamana teach the transmigration of souls. Liberation, the end of reincarnation, can only come when a soul has consumed all that is fated and earthbound: then it rises - freed from all heaviness - to the summit of the world.

Siddhartha is surrounded by silence, the sun no longer shines for him, the earth lies far below him, his soul dwells in the tremendous solitude of the summit. But then he returns to reality and finds himself trapped in a body subject to all the suffering of the world. The rapture was only a dream and an illusion; the restlessness of the heart remains.

The son of a prince, he is married young and his young wife gives him a son, Rahula. Years pass in fruitless brooding over the unsolvable questions. Siddhartha is now twenty-nine years old. Many envy him for his wealth, the splendour of his palace, his groves and rich fields, his many Dravidian slaves, his beautiful wife and his well-behaved son.

But to him, all his possessions, even the love of his family, seem like chains that keep him tied to the wheel of existence.

Are children really happiness? Siddhartha wonders. Can our desire for them protect

them from sickness, death and disappointment? What is possession? A chain thrown over the soul to keep it bound to the earthly. You can never really own anything, the shadow of impermanence looms menacingly behind everything.

Buddha as a monk

After a long inner struggle, the twenty-nine-year-old prince decides to leave everything behind - his wife and child, wealth, power and rule - and to search for the ultimate truth and meaning of life.

He decides to go first to the holy city of Benares, home to many sages, scholars, pandits, ascetics, artists and musicians.

There is an extraordinary spiritual climate there. There were many masters and teachers passing on their knowledge. Siddhartha met a famous pandit, a legal scholar, who taught him the dogmas and principles of religion without hesitation.

An extremely gifted student, Siddhartha quickly mastered the main principles of the doctrine and soon proved himself capable of pulling out all the stops of scholarly discussion. He began to make speeches himself and to debate with other pandits in the shade of the parasols spread out on the banks of the Ganges.

But his path is different, his needs cannot be satisfied by learning. Endless arguments about doctrinal ambiguities only wear him out.

Siddhartha realises that this scholastic method leads to nothing but temporary intellectual satisfaction, but certainly not to the truth of being. Studying the sacred texts did not provide him with answers to his painful questions about the meaning of human existence.

Siddhartha then abandons discursive, logical thinking, which may be useful for personal glory, but never for knowledge.

After breaking away from his first master, he goes into the forest and joins the yogic ascetics, hermits and recluses. For a while Siddhartha wandered with an old man who wanted to teach him painlessness by making pain a habit. They sit on beds of nails, cut themselves and deny their bodies food, drink and rest in order to raise their minds above material things.

But the great universe remains silent, the Deity remains hidden. All this self-torture does not lead out of the darkness.

Then the son of the Sakya prince finds another teacher, an ascetic with enormous willpower, who wants to conquer the body through magic and the influence of will, who removes the soul from the earth. Siddhartha remains in the convulsive state designed to free the mind from the wheel of being.

Eternity is silent; the ascetic's method only numbs, not liberates. Finally, Siddhartha continues his journey unaccompanied, a gaunt monk with a shaved head, carrying a begging bowl in front of him and living off the charity of pious people. After a long

pilgrimage, he reached the Naranjara River in the kingdom of Magadha and settled near the castle of Uruvela.

"There I saw a beautiful piece of land, the woods were beautiful, and there was a river, clear and friendly, with beautiful places to bathe, and all around were villages to go to. Then I said to myself: This spot of land is truly beautiful, the woods are beautiful, there is a river flowing there, clear and friendly, with beautiful places to bathe, and all around there are villages to go to. So it is good for the aspirations of a noble youth who wants to strive. So I sat there and thought: It is good for my aspirations."

In the shade of a mighty fig tree, he meditates on life and death.

"Birth and rebirth are laws of nature - so I must overcome them. Even aging seems to be a law of nature - so I must also overcome aging. And even sickness is natural - so I shall overcome sickness. And even dying is natural - so I must gain immortality. Even pain is a law of nature - so I shall overcome pain. Even impurity is part of nature - so I must overcome impurity."

Once again he tries to subjugate his body by force, he fights against the physical in order to silence desire and passion.

"I will clench my teeth, press my tongue against the roof of my mouth, and use my mind to hold down, suppress, torment my thoughts!"

He denies himself movement, reducing breathing, eating and any movement of the body to a tiny level. The torture continued for days and weeks.

The news of the holy penitent sitting under the fig tree in Uruvela had spread. Worshipful villagers stand at the edge of the grove; five ascetics have settled down near Siddhartha to share his penance, his torment and his effort. It is all in vain; the physical self cannot be tamed by external force, the gate remains closed. The path of asceticism is false. He will reach his goal only with an unweakened body. So Siddhartha turns back, he takes food. An image of his youth arises in his mind - how, as a boy, he had sat under the rose apple tree just outside the gates of Kapilavastu and practised the delicate, spiritual contemplation of yoga, how the feeling of the All-One had flowed to him from the mountains, the earth and the grove, and how he had experienced his first inner vision.

The five ascetics leave him, considering him an apostate. There seems to be nothing miraculous or ascetic about this impenitent man. A monk who breathes and eats, a man who smiles at heaven, is no longer a saint. The edge of the grove became lonely; the farmers returned to their villages. Siddhartha cowered forlornly under the huge canopy of the fig tree. In quiet, peaceful days and nights, his purified mind explores the secrets of the four contemplations.

He who here below
His suffering has ended,
Is freed from burdens,
is freed from fetters.

He who fights desires,
Sees the way and the wrong way,

Has become wise
And inclined to the highest.

He who is and remains a stranger to the world and to his brothers
Has chosen peace,
Needs neither home nor house.

He who shuns weapons
And fighting and killing
And loves the animals
And loves the plants
Can be a priest.

Buddha's enlightenment

With blissful clarity he sees the connections of existence: the awakening of desires and wishes from the day of birth and the beginning of suffering when desires and wishes are not fulfilled.

“So, by realising and seeing, my soul was freed from the corruption of desire, and my soul was freed from the corruption of becoming, and my soul was freed from the corruption of not knowing...

Realisation arises:

I am liberated. Birth and rebirth are destroyed, the sacred change is complete, the duty is fulfilled, there is no return to this world...”.

But this isolation is only the first stage of contemplation in which he breaks free from entanglement and suffering. Now, for the first time, he experiences the pure feeling of inner peace. Joy and contentment flow through his body. Then, in the second contemplation, he cuts the five bonds of the heart: the heart must renounce all desires in wishing, feeling, seeing and eating, and even in striving for inner contemplation. To want nothing more, to desire nothing, to long for nothing - this is freedom.

His purified, transfigured mind descends to the third contemplation; for even the heavenly joy of purification is still a fetter to be cast off.

Now the holy pain and joy, the contentment and delight, are gone. In the painless and joyless inner sea-calm, the feeling of well-being and suffering have disappeared. Equanimity and awareness fill the enlightened one, nothing binds his pure, refined mind.

Now, in the bright inner light of the soul, he sees the long series of his previous forms of existence and the chain of suffering that has lengthened with each new birth. His mind sees the whole universe filled with this suffering, which arises like a catastrophe from man's burning thirst for life. But he has conquered the thirst for existence and thus death. He enters the gentle, loving realms of Nirvana - the state of no longer wanting to be. The seed of further rebirths is destroyed, the chain of life is ended.

I am liberated forever,
This is the last life,
And there is no more rebirth...
The gates of eternity are opened
He who has ears to hear, come and listen...

This is the bliss of the fourth contemplation; Siddhartha, the son of Sakyas, has become Buddha - the enlightened one. Like the shining sun, his nature is purified, the wheel of existence passes him by.

“Blessed is the solitude of the joyful one who recognises and sees the truth! Blessed is the one who always keeps himself completely in check and no longer harms anyone! Blessed is the one who completely overcomes passion and all desire! Blessed is the one who conquers the pride of the defiant ego!”

The face of the transformed one shines, strength and certainty emanate from him...

Is there anything left to do?

The dark canopy of the fig tree hangs over the head of the enlightened one, like a window into the great Nirvana, the blue of the sky shows through the gaps in the foliage; far away, like water rushing by, restless life rushes by, beetles buzz, grass blows, forests wave, people live...

Yes, there is another thought that touches Buddha like the edge of a shadow: people still live, brothers and sisters, under the yoke of fate. Should the secret of salvation he found for himself be proclaimed to others? Will those shrouded in darkness and blinded by desire understand him? Won't the renewed contact with the world, the appearance before the people, tarnish the inner radiance of his soul? Wouldn't it be weariness and anguish?

Years of wandering

The Buddha meditates for a long time at the foot of the tree in Uruvela, and then the great kindness that flows from his freedom prevails. He decided to share his knowledge and preach the good news of salvation to those who were not yet saved.

The thirty-six-year-old thinks of the five monks who once kept him company in Uruvela and who thought he had gone astray. Where could they be?

And with his heavenly eye, the purified eye that transcends human limitations, he sees the five monks united in Benares, at the seer's stone in the deer park...

Gautama Buddha makes his way to Benares, the great city on the holy Ganges. He searches for people...

Benares has been the holiest of pilgrimage sites for the Indian people since ancient times. Situated almost in the heart of India, on the banks of the Ganges, the city of palaces, temples and tombs descends in terraces with wide steps down to the majestic river, which flows by in a calm, shimmering yellow-grey. On the heights, the wooden palaces of the princes, painted and decorated with carvings, gleam; under gilded roofs, massive temples

of the ancient gods Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma rest; crowds move over the stone steps that lead down to the cleansing flood.

Upako, a naked penitent, speaks to Ananda, a noble youth seeking salvation, at the edge of the human turmoil: 'My soul is wounded by the cruelty of existence. Look, Ananda, how it seethes with delusion, suffering and sorrow; see the beaten thief next to the pride of the prince, the accumulated wealth of the merchants next to the glaring poverty of the Sansis. Hunger, greed, fear and hopelessness dominate the hustle and bustle.

Ananda is one of many who have left family, inheritance and homeland, even the marks of their caste, to find the door to eternity. But he has not found salvation with the priests of the cults, nor with the penitents and ascetics.

There, in the midst of the crowd, walks a strange monk with shorn hair and beard, wearing a yellow robe, and a radiance radiates from him, so that a lane opens before him and the noise of the streets fades away. Gautama Buddha is walking through the streets of Benares.

Upako and Ananda follow the saint, driven by an inner compulsion. At the Dasamedh Steps they catch up with him and Upako speaks to the radiant one:

“Joyful, O brother, is your face, bright is the colour of your skin, and pure! For whose sake, O brother, have you gone out? Who is your master, we ask? Whose teaching do you profess to follow?”

The Buddha replied with a smile:

“The light of holy knowledge shines within me. Salvation has come to me unshakably, and there will be no more rebirth for me, my friends. Since I have gained true knowledge and insight, knowledge of the world of the gods, of Brahma, the supreme wisdom among beings, I am happy.”

The two seekers, Upako and Ananda, bow down before the teaching of the Enlightened One, listen to the Buddha's sermon on self-redemption, and henceforth follow the saint in all his ways. They had found their Master - the Master his first disciples. Others joined them, a select group of men and young men. Twelve of them became his constant companions, and Ananda became his favourite disciple.

Years of teaching and wandering through the beautiful country passed. Princes and statesmen, scholars and kings seek out the Enlightened One. He opens the door to Nirvana for all, to liberation from the agony of becoming and change. He speaks to the outcasts and the powerful of the earth, for all beings are equally precious to him - they are all chained to the wheel of reincarnation. No one approaches the exalted One unless he receives indulgence and kindness; they call him 'the shepherd' - 'the one who goes out to catch the lost sheep'.

Unhappy and outcast souls throw themselves at the Buddha's feet and are redeemed; criminals reflect on themselves in the face of his infinite kindness and suppress their passions. Only the inner circle of disciples and monks devote themselves entirely to holy self-contemplation. Only a few take the four vows of the order:

- A perfect monk cannot be impure.
- A perfect monk must not take anything that is not given to him with the intention of stealing, not even a blade of grass.
-A perfect monk must not knowingly take the life of any creature, not even a worm or an ant.
- A perfect monk must not boast of any superhuman perfection.

The path that the Buddha shows to his monks requires two actions: going out - leaving home and family, cutting all ties to life. It demands poverty, wandering and detachment from all external attachments.

The other part is the act of reaching out, the process of self-redemption that the Buddha experienced under the tree at Uruvela. But this last part is grace and a silent, lonely summit that everyone must reach for themselves.

There is no compulsion, no fixed organisation among Buddha's monks. The new path is not a religion in the traditional sense, but an opportunity that can be taken or left. This is why the Enlightened One also rejects the zeal of some disciples who want to establish fanatical formulas and rules. Salvation is a calm progression along the middle path - no self-torture through scruples and exaggerated asceticism.

Sometimes the Blessed is a guest at the homes of rich merchants or small princely courts, but mostly he seeks out quiet, beautiful places that remind him of the groves of his homeland. He likes to teach in the 'Stone Hermitage' or in the 'Victory Forest of Anathapindika'.

He exemplifies his teaching to the monks. With a transfigured smile, he walks through the villages with their mud huts and thatched roofs. He dodges every bug in the dust of the streets, rescues the bee that has fallen into the pond and treads carefully so as not to crush any flowers.

For forty years the Buddha walked among the people as a teacher. His teachings spread all over northern India.

Then, as the monsoon rains fall from the sky, the Buddha falls seriously ill. Once again, his willpower stems the decline and suppresses the weakness of his body, but he knows that the hour is near when he will enter the realm of death forever. Fear grips his disciples and Ananda turns to the Master in lament.

“If you are going to leave us, will you not speak to your congregation first?”

“I have spoken all my life, Ananda. What needed to be said has been said. Now I have nothing more to say.”

He closes his tired eyes and sinks into thought for a while. Then he raises his voice, his face radiant with transfiguration.

“Just as a mother protects her child, her only child, with her life, one should generate immeasurable love for all beings. One should generate immeasurable love for the whole world, above, below, to the side, without restriction, without enmity or antagonism.

But you should not get attached to the individual in love.

You should learn this love: the salvation of the heart...

By non-anger you overcome anger; by good you overcome evil; by gifts you overcome the miser; by truth you overcome the liar! Those who cause me pain and those who give me joy, I am equal to all; I feel neither pity nor disgust, joy and pain, honour and dishonour are balanced in me; I am equal to all: this is the perfection of my equanimity...

And one should neither kill nor cause to be killed any living being, nor condone others killing them; but one should refrain from harming beings, both those who are strong and those who tremble in the world...".

Again the Enlightened One remained silent for a long time, then, turning to Ananda, he continued:

"I am an old man, Ananda, my journey is behind me, I have become eighty years old, a frail cart held together only by makeshift ropes. Remember, monks, you are your own light; you do not need a new leader - each of you should be your own master. No one should want to play first."

Pantheism

The belief in many gods, also known as *polytheism*, is a religious worldview in which a variety of gods and deities are worshipped. The belief in one God, also known as *monotheism*, is also well known. This is a religious belief that emphasises the existence and worship of a single, all-powerful God. Less well known is the religious and philosophical worldview that sees the divine in all things and in all of nature. This is called *pantheism*.

Pantheism offers a fascinating perspective on the relationship between humans and nature, and invites us to recognise and honour the divine in everything. According to this worldview, the divine is present in every part of nature and the cosmos. Pantheists do not believe in a personal God, but in the unity and interconnectedness of all things; everything is part of a greater whole.

Pantheistic ideas have developed independently in different cultures and philosophical traditions. However, there are also important thinkers who have developed or strongly influenced pantheistic ideas. These include the Dutch philosopher *Baruch Spinoza* (1632-1677), the Italian philosopher and astronomer *Giordano Bruno* (1548-1600), and the ancient philosopher *Plotinus* (204-270 AD).

Pantheistic elements can also be found in Eastern philosophies such as Hinduism (e.g. Advaita Vedanta), Taoism and indigenous beliefs. Native Americans believed in Manitu as an invisible, omnipresent force that permeates the world and connects all living and non-living things. The Aborigines believed that everything in nature - animals, plants, rocks, water - had a spirit within it.

Baruch de Spinoza

Spinoza was born on 24 November 1632 in Amsterdam. He came from a Sephardic Jewish family that had fled to the Netherlands from the horrors of the Inquisition in Portugal. His parents belonged to a community of Sephardic Jews who had built a new life in Amsterdam. This community was renowned for its education, business acumen and deep roots in the Jewish faith. Spinoza's father, *Miguel de Spinoza*, was a respected merchant who played an important role in the community.

Young Baruch grew up in an environment shaped by the strict religious and cultural traditions of his Sephardic ancestors. He was educated in the teachings of Judaism, but from an early age Spinoza showed a remarkable curiosity that took him beyond the boundaries of traditional Jewish doctrine.

Spinoza received his first formal education at the Torah School in Amsterdam, an institution renowned for teaching its students the strict traditions of Judaism. There he studied the Torah, the Talmud and the works of Jewish philosophers such as *Maimonides*, who sought to combine religious tradition with rational thought. But soon Spinoza began to have doubts about the religious dogmas he was being taught. His thirst for knowledge led him to study the philosophy and natural sciences that were emerging in Europe at the time. Spinoza read the works of *Descartes*, then considered the founder of modern rationalism. Descartes' method of finding truth through systematic doubt fascinated

Spinoza and inspired him to develop his own philosophy.

Spinoza began to question why God had to be seen as separate from the world and whether the Bible really contained the word of God. These radical ideas met with fierce opposition from the Jewish community. The community saw Spinoza as a threat to its religious and social cohesion, as his teachings undermined the very foundation of faith on which the community rested. His increasing isolation from the community was also reflected in his personal alienation, as he began to distance himself from the religious practices and rituals of his family and friends.

The defining moment in Spinoza's life came in 1656, when the Jewish community of Amsterdam decided to excommunicate him because of his controversial views. Herem, a form of religious banishment, was one of the harshest punishments the community could impose. The verdict against Baruch Spinoza read:

"*According to the decision of the angels and the judgement of the saints, we excommunicate, curse, condemn and reject Baruch de Espinoza, with the approval of the holy God, praise be to Him, and this entire holy community [...] with the curse with which Joshua cursed Jericho, with the curse with which Elisha cursed the boy, and with all the curses written in the law. Cursed be he by day and cursed be he by night; cursed be he when he lies down and cursed be he when he rises; cursed be he when he goes out and cursed be he when he comes in. May God never forgive him, may the wrath and anger of God be kindled against the man [...] and may his name be blotted out from under heaven, and may God cut him off from all the tribes of Israel [...] We decree that no one shall communicate with him orally or in writing, no one shall show him any favour, no one shall dwell with him under the same roof, no one shall come within four cubits of him, no one shall read any writing composed or written by him*".

After his excommunication, Spinoza changed his Hebrew name from Baruch to the Latin Benedictus.

For Spinoza, who was only 24 at the time, the excommunication meant not only the loss of his family and friends, but also complete social isolation. Rather than being discouraged, Spinoza saw the excommunication as an opportunity to develop his philosophical ideas freely and unhindered. The excommunication freed him from religious constraints and enabled him to develop his thoughts on God, nature and reason.

After his excommunication, Baruch de Spinoza withdrew from public life and lived in modest seclusion. He earned his living as a lens grinder, a job that left him enough time for his philosophical studies. Spinoza lived in a small apartment near The Hague, where he spent most of his time reading, writing and reflecting on the fundamental questions of life and nature.

His solitude and deliberate choice of a simple life were not a sign of resignation, but an expression of his philosophical conviction. Spinoza believed that a secluded and modest life would enable him to see things more clearly and free him from the distractions of the world.

Although Spinoza lived in relative isolation, he maintained close relationships with a small group of friends and like-minded individuals. Among his closest associates were some of the leading intellectuals and scientists of his time, including *Henry Oldenburg*, the

first secretary of the Royal Society in London. Through these friendships Spinoza remained connected to scientific and philosophical developments in Europe and was able to discuss his ideas in a wider context.

These intellectual friendships played an important role in Spinoza's life and work. Not only did they provide him with moral support, but they also enabled him to refine and develop his ideas. *Goethe*, who studied Spinoza's work extensively centuries later, admired the depth and clarity of his thought. Goethe was inspired by Spinoza's philosophical calm and stoic approach to life, which is reflected in Goethe's own writings.

Spinoza's life was marked by modesty and integrity, and many anecdotes attest to his strong character. One well-known story tells how Spinoza, despite his impoverished circumstances, turned down a lucrative offer that would have provided him with financial security but also the loss of his intellectual independence. Offered a professorship, albeit on the condition that he would not speak on controversial subjects, Spinoza refused, saying that he preferred to seek the truth in poverty rather than remain silent in wealth. This anecdote illustrates Spinoza's intransigence and his determination to place his philosophical principles above all else.

Spinoza's magnum opus, 'Ethics', is one of the most important philosophical works of the modern era. In five books, Spinoza presents his entire philosophy, which is based on a strict geometrical method. He deliberately chose this method in order to present his thoughts as clearly and unambiguously as mathematical truths. The 'Ethics' begins with the question of the nature of God, who in Spinoza's system is identical with nature itself, and from this develops a comprehensive theory of the human soul, emotions and the possibility of a happy life.

One of the most revolutionary aspects of Spinoza's ethics is his conception of God. For Spinoza, God is not a personal being who rules over the world, but rather the substance that underlies everything - God is nature itself. This pantheism, which sees God and nature as identical, is a radical departure from the traditional religious ideas of his time. Spinoza argued that everything that exists is part of this divine nature, and that human happiness lies in recognising and accepting this unity with nature.

This idea of pantheism inspired many later thinkers, including *Albert Einstein*, who described himself as a follower of 'Spinoza's God'. Einstein admired Spinoza's idea of an impersonal, all-encompassing God manifested in the order and harmony of the universe, and saw it as a deeper and more rational form of faith.

Spinoza's 'Ethics' was not published until after his death, as its contents were considered too radical to be printed during his lifetime. However, despite initial rejection and condemnation by religious authorities, the work gradually gained recognition and influenced a wide range of thinkers during the Enlightenment and beyond.

The German poet and philosopher *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe* was deeply impressed by Spinoza's work and described him as one of the most important thinkers who had ever lived. Goethe found in Spinoza's philosophy a source of inspiration and confirmation of his own views on the unity of nature and spirit. Spinoza's influence is also reflected in Goethe's literary work.

Spinoza's 'Ethics' laid the foundations for many modern philosophical debates and

remains an admired and hotly debated masterpiece of philosophy.

In addition to 'Ethics', Spinoza also wrote 'Tractatus Theologico-Politicus', a work that covers both philosophical and political topics and powerfully articulates his views on freedom and tolerance. The Tractatus is a courageous defence of freedom of expression and the separation of religion and state, written at a time when these ideas were considered highly subversive. Spinoza argued that the state had no right to control the religious beliefs of its citizens, and that true religiosity must arise from an inner, personal conviction that should not be influenced by external coercion.

Spinoza was a passionate advocate of democracy, which he believed to be the most rational and just form of government. In his political philosophy he argued that all men are equal by nature and that the power of the state must be based on the consent of the governed. Spinoza saw democracy as the best way to protect individual freedom, as it gave citizens the opportunity to participate in lawmaking and to represent their own interests.

These ideas have had a profound influence on the development of modern democracy. *Thomas Jefferson*, one of the principal authors of the American Declaration of Independence and an influential advocate of democracy, was inspired by Enlightenment ideas, including Spinoza's conceptions of freedom and the power of the state. Jefferson shared Spinoza's conviction that government must be subordinate to the will of the people and that individual liberty is the foundation of any just society.

Spinoza's political philosophy has also had a lasting influence on debates about the role of religion in public life. His defence of freedom of speech and the separation of church and state laid the intellectual foundations for the modern liberal democracies that characterise the Western world today.

Baruch de Spinoza remains one of the most fascinating and influential figures in the history of philosophy. His ideas, often contrary to the prevailing beliefs of his time, laid the foundations for a radical reorientation of philosophical thought. Spinoza was not only a pioneer of the Enlightenment, but also a thinker whose work transcended his time and continues to inspire philosophers, scientists and spiritual seekers today. Spinoza's unwavering faith in reason, his conception of God as nature, and his emphasis on living an ethical life in accordance with one's understanding of the world have influenced generations of thinkers.

But Spinoza's legacy is not only intellectual. His life itself, marked by humility, integrity and the search for truth, is a shining example of the power of thought and the importance of intellectual freedom. In a world often dominated by dogma and prejudice, Spinoza's message remains as relevant as ever: true freedom comes from recognising necessity and being able to look at the world rationally, without illusions.

The ideas and life of Baruch de Spinoza invite us to reflect on the deeper questions of existence - the nature of the universe, the role of reason, and the possibilities of the human spirit.

Giordano Bruno

Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) also held a pantheistic view that God and the universe are one. He rejected the idea of a personal God and believed in the infinity of the universe and the existence of countless inhabited worlds.

Giordano Bruno was born in 1548 near Naples. He studied in Naples from 1562 and entered the Dominican Order in 1565. He soon came into conflict with the Order's leadership because he refused to worship the Virgin Mary and gave away pictures of saints. He was ordained a priest in 1572. As a monk, he studied philosophy from 1566 and theology from 1570 to 1575.

In 1576 Bruno was accused of expressing doubts about the incarnation, defending Arianism and reading the writings of the Church Father Jerome and throwing them in the latrine. Bruno no longer felt safe in Naples and went to Rome. His eventful life then took him back to his home town of Nola, where he travelled around northern Italy and finally decided to embark on a long journey across Europe. He gave lectures and repeatedly came into conflict with the authorities.

In his work *De l'Infinito, Universo e Mondi* (On the Infinite, the Universe and the Worlds) he explained that the stars are like our sun, that the universe is infinite, that there are an infinite number of worlds and that these are inhabited by an infinite number of intelligent beings.

He travelled to Germany, went to Prague for half a year, returned to Germany and in 1591 went to Italy, where he was denounced to the Inquisition for religious defiance. In May 1592 Bruno was arrested in Venice and charged with heresy. The charges included the denial of central Catholic dogmas, the advocacy of Copernicus' heliocentric world view, the assertion of the infinity of the universe and the existence of countless inhabited worlds, and pantheistic views that equated God with the universe.

Bruno was first tried in Venice. He skilfully defended himself by arguing that his ideas were philosophical, not theological. The Venetian Inquisition was initially prepared to acquit Bruno, but succumbed to pressure from the Roman Inquisition and handed him over to Rome.

In 1593 Bruno was transferred to Rome and imprisoned in the dungeons of the Inquisition. The trial lasted seven years, during which Bruno was repeatedly interrogated and asked to recant his ideas. Bruno steadfastly refused to recant his beliefs, insisting that his views were compatible with reason. The Roman Inquisition accused Bruno of heresy for his cosmological views, the idea that God and the universe are one, and for magical practices.

On 20 January 1600, Bruno was found guilty and excommunicated. He was ordered to recant his teachings, but refused, saying: ”*Perhaps you will announce my sentence with greater fear than I will accept it.*”

On 17 February 1600, Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake in Rome as a heretic. During his trial he said: “*I am not afraid of death, and I am ready to die for my convictions. Truth is the light of the soul.*”

Personal experiences

Many people report personal experiences which they interpret as being influenced by beings from the beyond. These experiences can be very real and significant. People can feel, hear or see invisible beings and experience events that cannot be explained logically. Many cultures believe that deceased ancestors can protect, advise or even punish the living. In spiritualist sessions, the other side tries to explain the existence of God and higher spirits, creation, and the meaning and purpose of life. All over the world, relatives are told that a loved one is about to die. Sensitive people report encounters with the deceased to show them that they are not really dead. Some deceased people cannot part with their possessions and appear as poltergeists.

Ancestor worship and ancestor veneration

Because it is also an indication of a possible life after our earthly departure, I would like to mention ancestor worship, which is widespread in many cultures around the world, especially in Asia, Africa and among indigenous communities.

Ancestor worship holds that the souls of the deceased continue to influence the lives of the living and can act as intermediaries between the human and divine worlds. Worship often involves rituals such as prayers, offerings and ceremonies to appease the ancestors, seek their blessings or ask for their guidance. In some cultures, such as Chinese Confucianism, ancestor worship plays a central role in the family structure, helping to maintain family ties and moral values. In African traditions, ancestor worship is often associated with the belief that ancestors are still present in everyday life. As well as strengthening cohesion within families and communities, ancestor worship reflects a belief in the continuity of life after death. It is an expression of respect, gratitude and the belief that the dead have an important place in the lives of the living.

Ancestor worship - the veneration and commemoration of deceased ancestors - also has a long and varied history in Europe. The Germanic and Celtic peoples worshipped their ancestors as protectors and intermediaries between the human world and the world of the gods. In Greek and Roman culture, ancestors were honoured with offerings, prayers and rituals. With the Christianisation of Europe, many pre-Christian ancestor cults were either suppressed or incorporated into Christian traditions. For example, on All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, graves are visited and decorated with candles and flowers. The veneration of saints can also be seen as a form of ancestor worship, as they are often seen as mediators between humans and God.

Experiences with beings from the other world

There are many reports of apparitions following the death of a loved one. Medium *Manou Gardner* tells of people who have had a profound personal encounter with a deceased person. I quote from the chapter 'Encounter with the deceased grandmother':

"In Gothenburg there lived Emma, a young woman whose heart was full of grief and longing for her deceased grandmother. Emma had grown up with her grandmother

after the early death of her parents. This special woman was not only Emma's family member, but also her best friend, teacher and the source of countless happy memories. They shared everything from quiet afternoons in the kitchen, where the smell of freshly baked cakes filled the air, to long walks along the harbour, where they shared stories and dreams. When her grandmother died, Emma felt a void that could not be filled. She missed the warm hugs, the wise advice and most of all the unconditional love her grandmother had given her.

One dark and cold winter night, Emma was awakened by something indefinable. When she opened her eyes and saw her grandmother's figure at the foot of her bed, she was frightened at first. But she saw her grandmother's loving gaze, saw the translucent figure, and her fear disappeared. And even though her grandmother didn't say a word, Emma knew why she had come.

It was a sign of the infinite bond that exists beyond death. Her grandmother stood there, bathed in soft light, with a smile that seemed to dispel all the worry and sorrow in Emma's heart. In that moment, Emma understood that the love that had bound them together would never fade. Her grandmother's appearance was proof that their souls were forever linked, regardless of the physical world. For Emma, this nocturnal encounter became an unshakeable sign of her belief in life after death and the certainty that "love is the strongest link between worlds".

Although there can be wonderful experiences with 'deceased' relatives, I warn against getting involved with otherworldly beings. The beings who can make themselves known in the earthly realm are those who have not yet found their way to the higher spheres and sometimes do not even realise that they do not live on earth. They make themselves known as poltergeists, bothering people, making their voices heard and becoming more intrusive the more attention they receive. People who have been abused or neglected in childhood and suffer from mental illness are particularly at risk.

I have had many years of experience with inspiration in dreams. In the early years of my search for truth, I received dreams that answered questions I had asked myself. In time, I found this pleasant and began to ask questions consciously. The strangest thing was that I always woke up at exactly the same time, down to the minute. If I didn't wake up myself, I was awakened by a noise, like a child crying.

When I started to question the answers, I kept having dreams - maybe 50 times in all! - where I was outside a city (I think it was Vienna) trying to get home. But I kept wandering around and couldn't find my way back. When I woke up, I had the feeling that I was mentally lost. But here comes the kicker: Just when I thought all I wanted to know was the truth, I was told clearly and unequivocally in the dream: 'The truth is shit'. That was finally too much for me, I was outraged and didn't want to know any more of that information. Now they leave me alone.

Why did I get involved in this long 'communication'? Because I had to find out what kind of extraterrestrial beings were manifesting themselves, and because I wanted to make contact with everyone who had written the factual report. I wanted to know who these beings were who were involved in the transmission of information about Christ. But obviously these beings were not interested in me.

At the beginning of my search for the truth, I also wanted to find out if it would be possible to make contact with beings from the beyond by electronic means, in order to avoid the influence of the medium in the transmission of information. After all, computers and all sorts of electronic components already existed, and beings from the other side could influence them. If their influence was sufficient to cause people to hear voices in their heads, to affect objects or even to make themselves partially visible, then influencing sensitive electronic components should not be impossible. Obviously, these thoughts were not perceived, not understood, not commented upon, or not considered significant.

Surely there are ancestors who care about the welfare of the family, who are still in the near-earth spheres and who are perceived by humans as guardian spirits. People who have had near-death experiences also report important spirit beings who help them and enable them to return to earth. However, these spirits are already further away from Earth and - it is said - can only be reached through a kind of tunnel.

I have the impression that these 'higher' and helpful spirits once lived on earth too. They seem to already know what is really important in life, which is to live lovingly with all living beings. But even these spirits still have certain earthly ideas and believe in archangels and other 'higher' spirits. Just as there are countless different deities believed in on earth, so it seems to be in the hereafter. People who have lived as Catholics on earth believe in Jesus as the Son of Almighty God, others believe in Christ as the true God. There seem to be all sorts of hybrids. Over time, their ideas change, and so it is understandable that otherworldly communities form which believe the views received by Kubasek and published as a factual report by Woller to be true.

I don't want to leave a negative impression of spiritual beings in the afterlife. People who have had near-death experiences describe beautiful landscapes and loving spiritual beings. They are so impressed that they cannot forget the experience and change their lives as a result. However, these are experiences that say nothing about how life is lived in the longer term in the afterlife. It would not be enough for me to always be in a state of the most glorious sensations; when I leave this world, I would like to meet beings who not only live happily and in love with each other, but who also take on tasks and responsibilities and who are aware that spiritual changes can take place at any moment and can also go in the wrong direction.

You must realise that those who find themselves in spheres close to Earth have interests just as we humans do. There are also psychopaths who find satisfaction in a person's suffering and persuade them to jump over the bridge because they are worthless and useless anyway. Others make themselves important and are happy when the victim follows their instructions. In order to avoid being institutionalised, victims often avoid confiding in others.

One should not believe that everyone has a certain number of guardian spirits. There is no guardian spirit that whispers in your ear that you will fall from the fifth floor while cleaning the windows. There are exceptions, of course, but I don't know of many.

I would like to end this chapter with an excerpt from the MDR documentary 'Leben mit Schizophrenie - Anna und die Stimmen in ihrem Kopf' (Living with schizophrenia – Anna and the voices in her head):

“*Jump, Anna, die*,” commands a female voice that Anna hears in her head. “*Hey, don't,*” interjects a male voice. The female voice again: “*Yes, be dead!”*

Anna describes the process: “*Most of the time it really feels like someone is standing behind me and whispering in my ear. The female voice is more dominant, I have it more often. With the male voice I hear: Help me, Anna, help me. Or: Come here. Or something like that. I gave them names, Eva and Demian, after my favourite book by Hermann Hesse. It's a difficult relationship, I'd say. Especially with Eva, who is very negative. Sometimes I think to myself: Oh, just shut up for once. I think I would pay anything to make her go away. If you say you have brown hair, it's true. If you say you have blue eyes, it's true. I have this diagnosis now and I suffer from it. I would use the word suffering because it is not something nice or pleasant. The problem is that you don't even know that you are ill. You think that everyone is lying to you, that everyone is conspiring against you or trying to harm you, trying to drive you to suicide. It is quite threatening and frightening*.”

You can also find out more about hearing voices in the Arte documentary 'Schizophrenia / Voices in the Head'. Physicist and psychologist *Dr Dr Walter von Lucadou* says: “*Hearing voices is a very common phenomenon... and there are many more people who hear voices than people who suffer from schizophrenia.”* The documentary goes on to say: *'”ecent research shows that most voice hearers are mentally healthy and lead perfectly normal lives. Nevertheless, voice hearers continue to be stigmatised and few speak openly about their experiences...*”.

Hildegard of Bingen attributed all her healing knowledge to visionary voices. *Joan of Arc, Giordano Bruno, Rainer Maria Rilke, Winston Churchill, Virginia Woolf* and *Andy Warhol* were all voice hearers.

Being and physics

If you ask 'artificial intelligence' (AI) what physicists understand by 'being' - that is, what constitutes the universe - the answer is something like this: “Physicists understand 'being' to be the totality of physical reality described by fundamental laws, forces, particles and fields.”

Probably every physicist is concerned with the question of what it is that creates elementary particles, then atoms, galaxies and stars, and finally living beings. They have not yet been able to give a description. Even artificial intelligence cannot provide a satisfactory answer because it can only search data stored in huge data centres.

David Bohm, a famous physicist who worked in the field of quantum mechanics, developed the theory of implicit order, which states that the universe has a deeper, non-material reality that permeates and connects everything. *John Archibald Wheeler*, another famous physicist, believes that consciousness plays a fundamental role in the universe and that reality is influenced by observation and the consciousness of the observer. *Eugene Wigner*, Nobel laureate in physics, emphasises the role of consciousness in quantum mechanics. Wigner argues that consciousness plays an essential role in the creation of reality and that quantum mechanics is incomplete without taking consciousness into account. Only the physicist *Hans-Peter Dürr* is convinced that the mind is the origin of all being.

Quantum entanglement shows how strangely existence can manifest itself. If you have two particles, for example electrons or photons, they can become entangled with each other, even if they are very far apart. If you measure the state of one of the entangled particles, the state of the other particle changes immediately, no matter how far apart they are. It is as if the two particles are 'communicating' and coordinating with each other, even though they are not physically connected. The fascinating thing about entanglement is that it challenges our classical notions of space and time.

Anton Zeilinger, who shared the Nobel Prize in Physics 2022 with *John Clauser*, and his team have carried out groundbreaking experiments on quantum entanglement. One particularly impressive experiment was in quantum cryptography, where entangled photons were used to enable tap-proof communication between Vienna and Beijing. Zeilinger's discoveries have shown how quantum entanglement can be used in practice to develop revolutionary technologies.

When we talk about the smallest particles in atoms, we generally think of elementary particles. But there is also a concept, string theory, that tries to describe the smallest building blocks of the universe even better. String theory proposes that fundamental particles such as quarks and electrons are not point particles, but tiny one-dimensional 'strings' or 'filaments'. These strings vibrate in different ways, and their vibrations determine the properties of the particles, such as mass and charge.

After my considerations it seems that the nature of information is similar, or that it is information itself.

Hans-Peter Dürr

Hans-Peter Dürr (1929-2014) was a prominent German physicist, philosopher and visionary, best known for his work in quantum physics and his commitment to sustainable development and peace research. A student of Nobel laureate Werner Heisenberg, Dürr worked intensively on quantum field theory and elementary particle physics. He made significant contributions to the development of theoretical physics. As the long-time director of the Max Planck Institute for Physics in Munich, he worked on fundamental questions in physics and natural philosophy.

In addition to his scientific work, Dürr was also involved in socio-political and ecological issues. He was a member of the board of Greenpeace Germany and founded the *Global Challenges Network e.V.*, an association concerned with global challenges. He has received numerous awards for his work, including the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize'.

Hans-Peter Dürr's work has often explored philosophical and metaphysical issues, particularly the relationship between science, being and spirit. In '*Mind, Cosmos and Physics*', Hans-Peter Dürr combines his profound knowledge of quantum physics with philosophical and spiritual considerations to explore the relationship between mind, matter and the cosmos. The book is a journey to the fundamental questions about the nature of reality and the role of human consciousness in the universe.

Dürr begins by introducing the revolutionary findings of quantum physics, which challenge our classical, mechanistic view of the world. The quantum world is not deterministic, but characterised by probabilities, uncertainties and correlations. These findings suggest that reality is much more complex and dynamic than classical physics would suggest.

A central theme of the book is the relationship between spirit and matter. Dürr argues that spirit and matter do not exist separately, but are inextricably linked. Quantum physics shows that the observer and the observed phenomena are in a fundamental interaction. This suggests that consciousness plays an active role in shaping reality.

Dürr emphasises that the universe is not a dead mechanism, but a living, dynamic whole in which everything is interconnected. He draws parallels between the findings of modern physics and the insights of ancient spiritual traditions that view the cosmos as a unified, ensouled being.

For Dürr, humans are not just passive observers, but active participants in cosmic events. Our consciousness and actions affect the world around us. Dürr advocates an ethical attitude that recognises this responsibility and works for a sustainable and peaceful world.

Dürr does not see science and spirituality as opposites, but as complementary ways of understanding the depths of reality. While science explores the outer structures of the world, spirituality explores the inner dimensions of being. Both approaches are necessary to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of reality.

At the end of the book, Dürr calls for a new way of seeing that integrates the insights of quantum physics, the wisdom of philosophy and the insights of spirituality. He sees this

as the key to overcoming the global challenges of our time and creating a sustainable, peaceful and just world.

In some videos, Hans-Peter Dürr describes his view of the mind as the driving force: "*We have to see reality in a very different way. No longer materially, but much more openly. Strictly speaking, we can no longer speak of particles, there are no parts, there is only the whole... The origin of all being is actually spirit... Matter is the crust of spirit.*"

Intelligence and Artificial Intelligence

I ask the artificial intelligence (AI) ChatGPT and DeepSeek: "*What is artificial intelligence?*"

ChatGPT answers: "*Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the ability of machines and computers to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence. This includes, but is not limited to, recognising language, making decisions, learning from experience and solving complex problems*".

DeepSeek answers: "*Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the development of computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. AI systems can learn from data and recognise patterns, find solutions to complex problems, understand and process human language, recognise objects, faces and scenes in images, and make decisions based on data and algorithms*".

I ask ChatGPT: "*What does ChatGPT mean?*"

ChatGPT replies: "*ChatGPT is a language model developed by OpenAI. The name 'ChatGPT" stands for 'Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer'. The model is based on the GPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer) architecture and has been specifically trained to generate human-like text and have natural conversations. ChatGPT uses machine learning to learn from large amounts of text data. It can be used in a variety of applications including customer support, virtual assistants, text generation and more. The goal is to enable the most natural and contextual interaction possible between humans and machines*".

DeepSeek's response is more extensive, but I'll leave out the summary: "*DeepSeek Artificial Intelligence Co., Ltd. (DeepSeek for short) is a Chinese company specialising in the development and research of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. The name 'DeepSeek' is composed of two terms: 'Deep' refers to 'deep learning', an advanced method of machine learning based on artificial neural networks that is particularly good at recognising complex patterns in large amounts of data. 'Seek' means 'to search' or 'to strive for', and refers to the goal of finding new solutions and insights through AI.*"

I ask DeepSeek: "*Does DeepSeek feel anything like the joy of collecting data and creating answers?*"

The answer is: "*No, DeepSeek or similar AI systems do not feel joy or other emotions. AI systems are technological tools based on algorithms and data processing. They do not have consciousness, feelings or subjective experience. When DeepSeek collects data and generates answers, it does so purely on the basis of mathematical calculations and programming logic. The AI analyses the input data, recognises patterns and generates answers based on trained models and available information. This is done without any emotional or conscious experience.* "

ChatGPT's answer is similar: "*As an AI model, I do not feel emotions such as happiness, sadness or frustration because I have no human feelings or consciousness. However, I have been designed to respond to queries in the best way possible and to provide helpful information.* "

I ask DeepSeek: "*Are dedicated data centres the basis of DeepSeek?*"

The answer is: "*Yes, dedicated data centres are an important technical foundation for AI systems like DeepSeek. Data centres provide the infrastructure needed to process the massive amounts of data and perform the complex calculations required for AI models. Specialised processors are optimised for the parallel processing required to train and run AI models. High-performance servers are needed to handle the computationally intensive tasks of machine learning and data analysis. AI systems require large amounts of storage space to store training data, models, and intermediate results...*"

I have asked these questions because I believe and want to show that living beings are independent spiritual beings and that their spirit makes unconscious or conscious life possible. And that the spirit that guides living beings is more than the elementary spirit that forms elementary particles. It cannot be that living beings are just a collection of atoms and molecules that disintegrate after death.

Brains do not create consciousness from a collection of information. If that were the case, AI would be far superior to us. Joy and suffering do not arise from neural circuits, but are manifestations of the smaller living beings that make up living beings. These 'smaller' living beings serve the spiritual-mental entity on the one hand, and in the form of cells, the earthly body of the living being on the other.

The factual report explains several times how the living beings came into being and how the different living beings developed. I find these explanations plausible and have therefore incorporated them into my world view. You can download the factual report, which I have published in pdf format, from my homepage and read the passages about the spirit.

Many people have a wrong idea about 'artificial intelligence'. They are afraid that one day AI will become independent and take control over us humans. That is why I have asked AI the above questions and let it answer itself. What we should avoid is making AI do harmful things, such as controlling weapons and using them effectively.

We must distinguish between the intelligence of living beings and artificial intelligence. Intelligence manifests itself in living things; it is an expression of the guiding spirit that is present in every living being.

Even the spirit that guides cells is intelligent and capable of understanding complex processes. Animal cells have a flexible cell membrane and contain various organelles (small "organs" within the cell) such as the nucleus, mitochondria and endoplasmic reticulum. In addition to the cell membrane, plant cells have a rigid cell wall, which gives the plant stability. Plant cells also contain chloroplasts, which are responsible for photosynthesis.

The spirit of plants, animals and humans is 'greater' and the spirit of cells serves these living beings. Under unfavourable conditions, it reports the unfavourable state to the spirit, which perceives these conditions as pain.

There is good reason to believe that - as described in the chapter 'The Bridge of Consciousness' - the spirit with its spiritual entity adapts to the forming body at a certain

point in time and leaves it after a certain time. We can also assume that the spiritual structure is made up of small spiritual beings, similar to cells, and that it can express joy, love, harmony, mental pain, etc., depending on its state.

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Please understand that it is not possible to provide a complete list of all the books and essays I have studied and which have finally yielded my view of the world. For a more detailed study of the subject please refer to comprehensive literature existing on the topic.